



**INTERNEWS**

**ACCESS TO INFORMATION PROGRAM**

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## Executive Summary

Internews launched the three-year Access to Information Project (A2I) on October 1, 2014. It is scheduled to run through September 30, 2017. The project aims to strengthen the long-term viability of targeted media outlets in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, facilitate regional cooperation and conduct a number of activities designed to promote the modernization of newsrooms throughout the region, the financial viability of media, and increased access to information that will keep government institutions accountable to citizens.

A2I activities are implemented toward the following four objectives:

- Objective 1: Increased regional cooperation to improve the competitiveness of non-state media outlets through content generation and sharing;
- Objective 2: Increased resilience of independent media to survive the impending treaty-mandated shift to digital broadcasting in 2015 across Central Asia;
- Objective 3: Professional Standards for Diverse and Sustainable Media Voices;
- Objective 4: Improved Legislative and Policy Environment.

## Year 1 Overview

### Major Accomplishments

- The first annual regional conference was held. The event served as a valuable and rare opportunity for media managers to meet their colleagues and form partnerships with outlets from other cities and neighboring countries, which are particularly important given the common economic challenges they are all facing due to the global financial slowdown. Linkages among regional media to encourage content exchange and deeper regional cooperation can help alleviate some of the pressures associated with declining ad markets and currency devaluation. Attendees were also able to learn about the latest technologies in TV broadcasting at an exhibition co-funded by partner organizations and to showcase content they have available for sharing at a media fair. Internews was able to attract several international and local organizations as co-organizers and sponsors of the event that allowed Internews to increase the total number of attendees from the originally planned 35 to 77; invite 8 additional media experts (beyond the two originally budgeted for) and additional guest speakers from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan;
- Eighteen journalists and editors from independent media outlets in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and the Kyrgyz Republic took part in the project's first annual cross-border exchange program. Through a mix of master classes and field work, the program provided participating media professionals the chance to learn from newsroom innovations that Otyrar TV in Shymkent, Kazakhstan has successfully piloted and gave them tangible cross-platform production skills to take back to their home outlets.
- Ten teams involving 30 participants from media outlets, local civil society organizations and IT companies in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and the Kyrgyz Republic attended the project's first Media and Social Innovation Lab. Over the course of two intense days, the teams developed prototypes of online and mobile platforms that address social challenges they see in their home communities and will allow citizens to play an active role in their

solution. Internews and local partners continue to support the development of the most promising prototypes through seed grants and mentorship.

- Internews helped the “I will help” project team that won the Lab to find a partner for further realization of the project. The idea of the “I will help” project is to link people who are able to donate time, money, or materials with the organizers of projects for social good through an online platform. One of the largest and best-known Kazakh CSOs, the Mercy Volunteer Society (MVS), is interested in cooperating and using the “I will help” platform in their operations. Internews will provide a seed grant to support development of the “I will help” project through MVS by the end of 2015.
- The Foundation for Female Leadership developed the project “Close People” to help prevent suicide among children and teens. After the Lab, Internews supported the team to present the project to potential donors. The Foundation was selected as a winner of a grant from the Eurasia Foundation in October 2015. With this grant, the Foundation will be able to continue promoting progressive ideas in the field of children’s health and familiarize the public with suicide prevention resources through the online resource developed at the Lab;
- Local media in Central Asia often have trouble filling their programming schedules with high-quality, legal broadcast content, therefore A2I launched a cloud-based content-sharing hub that aims to address that need. It allows participating private media outlets to share content they produce and download contributions from other outlets for broadcast to their audiences for free.
  - More than forty media outlets in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and the Kyrgyz Republic have collectively uploaded more than 1,200 video and audio programs to date;
  - Twelve media outlets used small grants from A2I to produce series of 15 different programs on timely social, environmental, and legal issues and other educational topics. They post these programs on the Google Cloud Hub for rebroadcasting by other A2I partner stations.
  - Internews began producing “News of the Regions”, a compilation of regional news clips from various TV partner stations in Kazakhstan, which increased use of the content exchange in that country. In addition, Internews launched production of the “Interview” program featuring interviews with experts on a variety of topics. Partners in all three countries are actively using the interviews either in full or in part in their broadcasting.
  - Content-sharing hub “cover page” was developed in Kyrgyzstan, which facilitated the content exchange on national level
- A2I’s Newsroom 2.0 initiative provides a combination of in-person and remote technical assistance and trainings to help select media outlets adapt their content to digital media platforms and reach their audiences in new ways. Six media outlets (two from each target country) have begun using new multimedia tools and formats to create interactive stories, created special projects that bring in advertising dollars while also supplying information that audiences want to know, and developed online promotion strategies that incorporate social media and search engine optimization techniques. These changes have helped the outlets increase traffic to their websites, improve planning and distribution of stories across media platforms, and attract the attention of advertisers. For example, since Alau-TV (Kostanai, Kazakhstan) implemented the recommendations provided through this

initiative, the percentage of visitors that navigate to their site through social media accounts has doubled, the number of reader comments has increased by 30%, and views of the channel's videos on YouTube have also increased by 30%. The average monthly revenues brought in through their website have also increased. At multilingual radio and TV channel Yntymak (Osh, Kyrgyzstan), the number of unique visitors per day increased tenfold over the course of just one year. In Tajikistan, Tiroz TV (Khudjand) quadrupled the daily viewership of its website and significantly increased its sales of online advertisements;

- A2I subgrantee “Internews Kazakhstan” initiated a CSO coalition in October 2014 that, with significant support from international experts and organizations (the UN system in Kazakhstan, OSCE/ODIHR, OSCE Program Office in Astana), took an active role in developing and advocating for the adoption of the first-ever law On Access to Information in Kazakhstan. The active participation of Internews Kazakhstan and other CSOs in the working group of the Mazhilis (the lower chamber of Kazakhstan's Parliament) brought the draft laws on access to information and amendments to current laws on related issues closer into line with international standards (though not all of the coalition's recommendations were included in the final draft of the law and work remains to be done). The president of the Republic of Kazakhstan signed the law On Access to Information in November 2015. Amended provisions propose that 70% of information held by government bodies will now be publicly available, up from approximately 40% previously. These efforts will help increase the transparency of the government and other holders of information and promote implementation of citizens' constitutional right to receive and distribute information by any method not prohibited by law.

### **Lessons Learned/Challenges**

- Motivating local media partners to actively participate in the A2I content exchange initiative has been a challenge. Reasons for this reluctance to participate vary by country but include slow internet connections and high costs of international downloads, lack of staff to comb through content available on the exchange hub to find that which might be interesting to local audiences, and lack of resources to translate available content into the locally appropriate language. Internews has been working with partners to overcome these difficulties by introducing a “curation service” that highlights new and interesting content by country of production, developing ready-to-air news clip packages that increase the flow of information between areas outside the capital, and providing media partners with access to content stored on domestic FTP servers to avoid international download fees. Internews continues to communicate regularly with partner stations in each target country about potential cross-border production partnerships and ways to improve the content exchange system to make it more attractive and user-friendly;
- It's very difficult to get partner stations to trust others with their own creative products, which makes it difficult for them to unite into a genuine network. It's best to propose less “scary” alternatives, like joint purchase of content, to get stations in the habit of working together and learning to trust one another. The postponement of the digital transition has further disincentivized stations to cooperate more closely. However, the current economic crisis gripping the region has shown partners that their survival through it may well depend on collaboration. While prior to the launch of the A2I program, Kazakhstani stations were seen as being closest to forming a unified network, recent developments in

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have moved independent stations in those countries forward significantly toward a similar goal. The Association of Independent Broadcasters in Tajikistan has been doing remarkable work to advance the interests of independent stations in that country, while the formation of the Digital Technologies consortium of independent TV stations in Kyrgyzstan which have banded together with plans to run their own digital multiplex represents an innovative model that could serve as an example for other countries of the region. Internews will continue to support stations in each country to move further towards formation of genuine networks, as well as facilitate presentation of various models of collaboration between the three countries to seed inspiration and promote best-practice sharing across borders.

### **Opportunities/Moving Forward**

- Continued work on development of national networks of independent stations in each of the three target countries remains a major priority for the A2I project. Work towards this end will comprise recurring meetings of partner stations' executive decision-makers (whose buy-in is critical to ensure movement on this issue), expanded support for joint content production initiatives and further promotion of the content exchange to increase contact and build trust between partner stations, as well as targeted and prolonged engagement with station managers to organize joint content purchasing, unified pitches to advertisers, etc. as circumstances allow;
- Development and promotion of local language content, provision of trainings in local languages, and continued support to trained local language media trainers;
- Continued support for local partner media to expand and improve their online presences through Newsroom 2.0 on-site residencies and remote consultations and webinars. The contraction of the advertising market and high inflation across the region has only heightened the importance of improving online content offerings, which are often cheaper to produce and distribute than traditional broadcast content.

### **Quarterly (July-September 2015) Highlights**

- New ideas and innovative solutions created to boost content exchange among media outlets of the region;
- The next eight subgrantees were identified and awarded within the second round of small grants competition;
- A roundtable "Digital broadcasting of Kyrgyzstan: questions & answers" was organized by MPI in Kyrgyzstan;
- Association of Independent Broadcasters (AIB) held three roundtables on digital switchover issues to promote the interests of independent media outlets and raise concern among the government representatives;
- A webinar on new media formats led by Galina Timchenko, founder of Meduza.io, attracted the largest number of participants ever for an A2I webinar;
- Online and on-site trainings, residencies, and consultations continue to increase the professionalism of local media outlets;
- A TOT for Tajik-speaking media professionals took place in Dushanbe;
- The Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan adopted the draft law "On access to information" and corresponding amendments;

- 93 media outlets and journalists received legal consultations from IKZ, MPI and Khoma lawyers.

## Background/Context

### KAZAKHSTAN

- Several leading online services including vimeo.com, photo service flickr.com, and microblogging service tumblr.com were shut down by a court decision for posting extremist material in September 2015. Earlier, the government blocked online access to censorship circumvention tools like Turbo and TOR. The state TV channel Khabar reported that extremist information is being spread through Facebook, YouTube and many other websites. According to representatives of the Department of Monitoring Information under the Ministry for Investment and Development, Facebook is in first place for the distribution of extremist material. Officials said thousands of websites are under inspection, and dozens of user accounts are blocked on the grounds of preventing terrorism. Various human rights defenders nationally and internationally (including Adil Soz and the OSCE’s Representative for Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatovic) publicly [condemned](#) the government’s methods as being dangerous for freedom of expression. This increase in government censorship of online news and social media is a concern for Open Asia Online (OAO) and its multimedia partners.
- The government of Kazakhstan introduced a free currency rate in August 2015. This was followed by a drop in the exchange rate against the dollar from 185 to 250. By September 2015, the value of the Kazakhstan tenge (KZT) against the dollar fell to 300 and was then pegged by the National Bank at 270 KZT per dollar. As a result, prices for goods and services in Kazakhstan are expected to increase. Polls from media partners show that the drop in the value of the currency will significantly reduce commercial revenue and increase overhead costs for media companies. Surveyed media partners responded that they do not have resources to increase salaries, and are looking for ways to cut costs. In addition, the government stopped managing prices in the oil market, which led to an increase in prices by 25 percent, which is predicted to affect the growth of inflation. The country’s economic woes directly impact media partners, in terms of overheads, staff costs and reduced commercial income from other businesses hit by the rising cost of living.

### KYRGYZSTAN

- Legal proceedings against the media holding “Vecherniy Bishkek”<sup>1</sup> (which has received assistance from Internews under this project) were decided in favor of the ex-shareholder of the company, Alexander Ryabushkin. Re-registration of ownership is still in process, but Mr. Ryabushkin has already announced his [further plans](#) for the media outlet, which include increasing the circulation of “Vecherniy Bishkek” newspaper by launching a Kyrgyz-language version and expanding promotion outside the capital. Mr. Ryabushkin promised the staff that they would be free to select an editor-in-chief of their choice for

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<sup>1</sup> Legal disputes between the current owners and ex-shareholders of the media holding started in November 2014, when the ex-shareholders asserted their rights to ownership of the media holding and requested compensation for lost profits.

the outlet. However, Mr. Ryabushkin will have to find a new team to run the website, ([Vb.kg](#)), because the majority of the site's staff (about 20 people) [resigned in protest](#) at the end of August and founded a new news site, Zanoza.kg. "[Zanoza](#)" is already live online and is led by Dina Maslova, the ex-chief editor of Vb.kg;

- In July 2015, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic unilaterally renounced the 1993 Bilateral Agreement between the Kyrgyz Republic and the United States of America. The decision followed protest over the U.S. State Department's decision to award a human rights prize to Azimjon Askarov, a journalist and activist who is serving a life sentence in Kyrgyzstan for charges of inciting ethnic hatred during the June 2010 events. The 1993 agreement was the legal framework through which the United States facilitated humanitarian and technical economic assistance in Kyrgyzstan. The agreement provided for U.S. aid to Kyrgyzstan to be provided without levying taxes and customs duties. U.S. personnel located in Kyrgyzstan in connection with aid programs were granted near-diplomatic status. The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic was informed that this decision could put U.S. assistance programs in jeopardy, including programs to address violent extremism, increase economic growth and job creation, improve the educational system, and support the continued democratic development of Kyrgyzstan. Negotiations on a viable solution to the problem are ongoing between the officials of two countries. Implementation of U.S. assistance programs in Kyrgyzstan continue though some activities were put on hold.
- During the reporting period Kyrgyzstan was preparing to hold parliamentary elections. Fourteen political parties competed for 120 seats in the Jogorku Kenesh (the Kyrgyz parliament). The official election campaign kicked off in September 2015 and was widely covered by media, mainly through political ads, but also with debates and news reports. The public service Television and Radio Corporation (OTRK) arranged debates between the candidates with technical and consultative support from NDI and OSCE. Internews' PSB Project Director provided guidance to the anchors on hosting and moderating debate shows. The OSCE/ODIHR released a report on its [initial findings](#), which described competitive elections that would have benefited from greater transparency from the election administration. While it was not illegal to do so, media were criticized for using the elections as a way to earn money for political advertising, rather than on performing a service to inform voters about their choices.
- In August 2015, customs controls at the Kyrgyz-Kazakh border were officially abolished when the Kyrgyz Republic became a full member of the Eurasian Economic Union. According to officials this membership ensures the free movement of goods, services, capital and labor between the members of EEU. During the same period customs duties on goods from China grew three to four times, which has immediately reflected back on market prices. The depreciation of the Russian ruble and devaluation of the Kazakh tenge also weakened the position of the Kyrgyz som, and money transfers from labor migrants declined. All these factors had a negative impact on the purchasing power of the local population.
- [Two conflicts](#) took place in quick succession on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border in August 2015 between the residents of border villages Chorku (Tajikistan) and Kok-Tash (Kyrgyzstan). Several people from both sides were injured and several houses and vehicles were damaged in Kok-Tash village. During the second incident a border guard from Kyrgyzstan was shot and wounded during a routine patrol. Border conflicts are frequent



and likely to continue in the future, despite efforts of officials on both sides, who have difficulty reaching agreement on delimitation and demarcation of disputed border areas.

- The news agency “Alliance Press” [re-launched its operations in Osh](#). The media outlet positions itself as an independent informational resource that disseminates objective information on and analysis of political, economic and cultural events in Kyrgyzstan in Russian and Uzbek. The media outlet publishes news on its own website, [alliance-press.kg](#).

## TAJIKISTAN

- Tajikistan’s Supreme Court has banned the Islamic Revival Party (IRP) and labelled it a terrorist group following a case filed by the Prosecutor General’s Office. The Supreme Court ruled that the IRP should be included on a blacklist of extremist and terrorist organizations. The September 29, 2015, verdict forces the closure of the IRP’s official newspaper *Najot* (Salvation) and bans the distribution of any video, audio, or printed materials related to the party’s activities. Founded in October 1990, the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan is the only Islamic party officially registered in former Soviet Central Asia. Originally registered on December 4, 1991, it was banned by the Supreme Court in June 1993 and legalized in August 1999. According to some sources, the IRP had some 40,000 members. Since 1999, the party has reportedly been the second-largest party in Tajikistan after the ruling People’s Democratic Party of Tajikistan. Likely in connection with tensions around this issue, blocking of social media networks (Facebook, Odnoklassniki, YouTube) and independent online media (Ozodagon, Asia Plus) continues in Tajikistan.
- On September 30, 2015, during a conference on “The Digital Switchover in Tajikistan and Opportunities for Independent TV Stations” in Dushanbe held by the Association of Independent Broadcasters in Tajikistan, a representative from the state-owned national operator Teleradiocom announced that the committee has developed its own program on digital transition and that the deadline for full transition will likely be extended until 2017. He stated that the new program for digital transition by the state-owned national operator will take the interests of the private TV stations into account. (The current national multiplex still doesn’t include the private stations.) Conference participants expressed frustration that no information regarding development of the new program was provided before the conference. In their response, participants stressed the importance of involvement of public media organizations, responsible government agencies, and independent broadcasters as well as the working group established under the Committee in development of the new program. (See page 26-27 of the report.)
- Amendments to the Law on Public Associations were adopted by Parliament in June 2015 and signed by the president on August 8, 2015. The amendments require public associations to register grants and other aid they receive from foreign sources with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) before they can implement projects using those funds. It remains unclear what the procedure for registration of grants will require, and whether implementation of projects can begin after simple notification or after registration of the submitted notification in the Register of Humanitarian Assistance by the Ministry of Justice. The amendments also introduce a new inspection procedure for public associations without spelling out their scope or frequency. The vague wording of these amendments may result in arbitrary or discriminatory enforcement of the law. They may

deter civil society organizations from seeking out foreign funding for their activities, which may result in their closure or inability to continue working.

## Project Activities

### Objective 1: Increased regional cooperation to improve the competitiveness of non-state media outlets through content generation and sharing

#### *1.1. Regional networking and training events for media professionals and citizen journalists*

##### *Annual conference for media professionals*

*No activities to report this quarter.*

##### *Annual media and social innovation lab for citizen journalists*

See below for updates on the projects that were developed at the A2I Media and Social Innovation Lab, which took place in Bishkek in June 2015.

#### KAZAKHSTAN

- The team "I Will Help," which was selected by the contest jury as the winner of the Lab, aims to link people who are able to donate time, money, or materials with the organizers of projects for social good. With assistance from Internews, the team found a partner for the development and promotion of their project - one of the largest and best-known Kazakh CSOs, the Mercy Volunteer Society (MVS). In August 2015, MVS and the "I Will Help" team were working on a strategy for using the "I Will Help" platform to promote MVS's programs. In September 2015, work slowed down due to MVS' preparations for a major opening event, but at the end of the month, MVS and the I Will Help team filed an application for a grant from Internews. At the moment, the grant agreement is being prepared and will be provided to MVS for signature. (MVS will receive the grant as an organizational partner of the "I Will Help" team);
- The project "Close People" aims to help prevent suicide among children and teens. In July and August 2015 the project was presented to potential corporate donors, such as the Housing Construction Savings Bank of Kazakhstan and Breweries Carlsberg. Despite initial interest, the companies said they were not able to support the project due to financial difficulties related to the ongoing economic crisis in the region and uncertainty related to the fluctuating exchange rate in Kazakhstan. Internews helped the team with fundraising from other donors – Internews encouraged them to apply for the Eurasia Foundation in Kazakhstan's grant competition, while the Eurasia Foundation provided advice on writing the grant application. At the time of this writing, their application has qualified for the second stage of the competition, which requires a full proposal.
- The "Eco Atlas" team has been actively working to raise funds for development of the website, which will keep the public, government officials, and the media informed about environmental issues in Kazakhstan. Internews helped with fundraising and recommended several grant competitions of international donors. Work was temporarily suspended in September 2015, as the media partner of the environmental CSO

Ecomuseum, TAN TV, changed their editorial policy and became a sports TV channel. Currently, Internews is working with Ecomuseum to select a new media partner and find a sponsor for the project.

- In July and August 2015, Internews helped with coordination of the cross-border "Roads" project about urban traffic problems, which was developed jointly at the Lab by Otyrar TV from Shymkent, Kazakhstan, and Asia Plus information agency from Dushanbe, Tajikistan. In August 2015, Otyrar restructured the online resource to serve its project on public control over the state program to repair apartment buildings. The project is ready to go live, but the editor of Otyrar.kz, who took part in the Lab, left her position, which currently stands vacant. The site is looking for a new editor. The team hopes that once a new editor is found, the project can be rolled out on Otyrar.kz.

## KYRGYZSTAN

- Kloop Media continues to mentor and support the "Web portal for Naryn" team, which reported that lack of programmers is their biggest challenge as they strive to move their project forward. The portal aims to improve interactions between citizens and municipal service providers (e.g. water, garbage disposal) in Naryn through an interactive map and crowdsourced data on the quality of service provision. It would be embedded into the website of Naryn mayor's office. In turn, municipal services would receive a handy tool for planning and improving their services. The summer holidays were a slow period, but project development will resume next quarter. Kloop will bring one of the Naryn team members to its A2I-supported training on how to create website and mobile apps in October 2015 so that s/he can maintain the website for the project. To attract more visitors, Kloop plans to post a link to the Naryn municipal website on its own home page. Kloop will also support the team's social media marketing campaign and assist with improving the design and interface of the website including the way the information is delivered (e.g. by making informational materials more attractive).
- During the Lab, Beeline Kyrgyzstan informed participants about its corporate social responsibility program. Internews helped Yntymak draft and submit a proposal for funding from Beeline for their project, which would fill the gap of entertainment and educational Kyrgyz-language content for children, while providing them with the opportunity to make their voices heard by adults. Beeline representatives reported that Yntymak's proposal was reviewed and they said they are ready to support Yntymak's project after clarification of a few points, but they did not specify which points specifically. Yntymak has requested that information and Internews will assist Yntymak to revise their proposal in accordance with Beeline's requirements.
- Internews also assisted the "Cozy Courtyard" team with drafting and submission of a proposal to donor organizations after a presentation of their project at a donors' meeting held at Internews' office in Bishkek. No feedback has yet been received. Internews will continue to seek out opportunities for potential funding.

## TAJIKISTAN

- During the Lab, Asia Plus information agency from Dushanbe, Tajikistan, joined forces with Otyrar TV from Shymkent, Kazakhstan, to work on a similar idea – "Roads," a web portal about urban traffic problems. After the Lab, the Otyrar team changed the concept of the platform into a public control mechanism over the state program on repair of

apartment buildings in Shymkent, while the Asia Plus team stuck with the original idea on urban traffic problems. To date the project's IT specialist, is working with both teams to finalize websites based on Ushahidi (open-source software for information collection, visualization, and interactive mapping). Asia Plus plans to launch the project next year after updating their current website, which is outdated and cannot support the developed platform.

- The “Our Healthy Baby” project provides information in Tajik for young couples on how to keep their babies healthy. It is housed on a special section on the Tiroz website (currently closed to public access until its official launch). During the Lab, Tiroz developed a [Russian-language draft](#) of the project in cooperation with the local CSO “Nasl” (Generation), but after the event, the CSO refused to sign a joint memorandum on cooperation without funding. Tiroz decided to find another CSO partner and also involve TV SM-1 (Khujand) in the project. SM-1 has produced a series of TV programs on toddlers’ health in the past. Tiroz will use produced content for publication on their website. They are looking for a corporate sponsor before launching the project.
- A joint project between TV SM-1 and the CSO Youth Group on Protection of Environment (which are both based in Khudjand) called “Point of control” aims to raise the quality of public service provision in Tajikistan through the introduction of an online system for receiving and processing residents’ applications for various services. During the reporting period, the project’s team met with the Press Officers of the Khujand city hukumat (a municipal government body) for support and possible cooperation in Sugd province. The Khujand city mayor’s press officer was very interested in the project and said he will work with the responsible departments at the hukumat to include implementation of this project in their budget for the next year. The team needs approximately US\$5,000 for replication of the [Mo Metavonem](#) (We Can Do) project that was implemented by [CIFI](#) in Dushanbe. CIFI’s project coordinator Muhammadi Ibodulloyev was one of the country advisors at the Lab and his CSO will provide mentorship for the “Point of control” project after approval of the budget for its implementation.

## *1.2. Cross-border exchanges*

In April 2015, the first annual cross-border exchange took place at the media holding Otyrar TV in Shymkent, Kazakhstan, for 18 media professionals from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The first cross-border exchange focused on development of convergent newsrooms and involved a combination of trainings, master classes, exchange of experience and also technological and organizational assistance for the creation and development of convergent newsrooms.

After the cross-border exchange, participants used the experience and knowledge gained at the event to work at their media outlets. For example, a journalist came from Bashat TV, which produces TV and radio content but did not have a website. They hoped to launch one and wanted to educate members of their staff about the principles of convergent newsroom operation. The journalist was able to take back the knowledge and skills she learned during the exchange program to her newsroom and share them with her colleagues. The outlet’s new website, [Bashattv.kg](#) was launched a few months after the cross-border exchange. Staff members working

on the new site participate in A2I webinars on online media development. They receive technical consultations from Internews’ technical manager in Osh.

In Tajikistan, after participation in the event, the multimedia editor at Tiroz TV and Radio in Khujand began using a convergent production plan (a merged list of proposed content production across media outlets of several different formats) for the company’s radio and website. Previously, Tiroz had used separate production plans for their website and radio sides—the radio team didn’t know what the website team was working on and vice versa. This has since changed, so the content on the two sides mirrors or builds on one another. Working in this coordinated way is important because it allows the company to minimize production expenses and maximize available content by recycling and repurposing content across platforms.

Asia Plus news agency in Dushanbe doesn’t have a team dedicated to creating multimedia stories for its website. After participating in the cross-border exchange and gaining new skills in multimedia storytelling, a news editor at Asia Plus is now able to help his colleagues produce stronger multimedia stories. The news editor was a part of the team that produced a [longread](#) project devoted to the history of Tajikistan’s participation in World War II that was published in May 2015. The Asia Plus team first decided to create this project after attending an A2I webinar on longreads. The news editor’s participation in the cross-border exchange helped them improve the project and optimize various visual elements. The feature got 30,000 redirects from its website (through a special flash-animated banner) and was shared on Facebook 985 times and on Vkontakte 19 times. Asia Plus team published a second [longread project](#) on inclusive education for the disabled and was invited by Internews’ [Open Asia Online](#) team to participate in production of a [longread](#) on children with autism.

### 1.3. Regional content sharing project

The A2I project continues to help improve the quality and diversify the content of our television partners through the content sharing initiative. Upload and download statistics from this quarter are presented in the table below. *Please see Annex 2 for the total number of media outlets participating in content exchange to date.*

**Content Uploaded to Google Cloud-Based Hub (July-September 2015)**

Country	Total # of shared video segments	News episodes	Hosted informational programs	In Kazakh	In Kyrgyz	In Tajik	In Russian
Kazakhstan	688	624	64	380	-	-	308
Kyrgyzstan	114 (GD: 96; FTP: 18)	92	22 (+14 photos on FTP)	-	45	-	55
Tajikistan	786	643	135 (+8 photos)	-	-	786	-
TOTAL	1,588	1,359	243	380	45	786	363

**Content Downloaded from Google Cloud-Based Hub (July-September 2015)**

Country	Total # of shared video segments	News episodes	Hosted informational programs	In Kazakh	In Kyrgyz	In Tajik	In Russian
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Kazakhstan	656	528	128	279	-	-	377
Kyrgyzstan	6	-	6	-	6	-	-
Tajikistan	332	332	-	-	-	332	-
TOTAL	994	860	134	279	6	332	377

***Year 1 Content Exchange Statistics:***

*Content exchange participants by quarter and country:*

	KZ	KG	TJ	Total
Oct-Dec 2014	13	11	10	34
Jan-Mar 2015	+1	+2	+2	39
April-June 2015	+3	+4	+3	49
Jul-Sep 2015	+3	+2	+2	56

*Audio-video content shared through the Google Cloud Based Hub by language*

	in KZ	in KG	in TJ	in RU	Total
Oct-Dec 2014	0	0	0	0	0
Jan-Mar 2015	71	37	121	72	301
April-June 2015	137	87	440	260	924
Jul-Sep 2015	380	45	786	363	1,574
					Total: 2,799

*Content shared through the Google Cloud Based Hub by type*

	News episodes	Hosted informational programs	Photo	Total
Oct-Dec 2014	0	0	0	
Jan-Mar 2015	267	34	0	301
April-June 2015	796	128	0	924
Jul-Sep 2015	1,359	221	22	1,602
				Total: 2,827

Use of the content exchange is increasing but remains lower than Internews would like to see. We are working with partners to overcome barriers to usage on several fronts. For example, Internews is doing its best to help partner TV stations improve the quality of their Internet connections, as slow internet is one of the reasons stations have cited for not using the content sharing hub more actively. In Kazakhstan, negotiations are ongoing with internet provider Beeline, which has expressed willingness to provide A2I partners in the regions with high-speed Internet access at a discounted price. In Kyrgyzstan, Internews has provided consultations for partners in the south (where internet remains an issue) regarding what providers are available, which is faster/cheaper, etc. In Tajikistan, Internews launched negotiations with the Tcell mobile and Internet service provider to create a national Virtual Private Network that will offer Tajik A2I TV partners unlimited Internet traffic for a highly discounted price in October 2015.

Media outlets in Kazakhstan were not initially motivated to rebroadcast news stories from other regions until Internews packaged them into a ready product (“News of Regions”). In Kyrgyzstan

several partners faced technical problems uploading and downloading content to/from the Cloud hub due to slow internet and high costs for international downloads. Moreover, they have little incentive to stop using pirated content, which is readily available for free and not limited by the government, which does not enforce laws governing broadcasting rights. Internews continued to post content on its FTP servers for content exchange within countries (in parallel to posting on the Cloud hub). By the end of Year 1 Internews also began to conduct and film interviews with experts on various topics of interest for broadcasting by partner outlets in all three countries.

Country-specific approaches to increase usage and updates on newly available content are detailed below:

## KAZAKHSTAN

This quarter, Internews launched production of interviews with experts on current affairs topics in August 2015. Interviews are uploaded to the hub for sharing without editing so each station can use them as they see fit (e.g. in the news, in an analytical program, in a TV magazine format). Examples of interviews conducted by Internews that have been used by Kazakhstani partners include:

- [You can get up to three years in prison for libel in social media](#) – interview with a lawyer Jokhar Utebekov as presented on Radiotochka.kz;
- [Kazakhstan needs devaluation of national currency](#) – interview with expert in economics Denis Krivosheev as presented on Alau TV.

Two interviews in particular generated great interest among content exchange partners in Kazakhstan. One was an interview with Dmitry Kotlyarov - an expert in communications who is the head of the monitoring group on the implementation of Kazakhstan's commitment to fight corruption. He shared his impressions about the development of Kazakhstan's landmark (if also problematic) draft law "On access to information." The second interview on this topic was with a legal consultant for the International Center for Nonprofit Law, Gulmira Kuzhukeeva, who spoke about the difficulties of dealing with government authorities when it comes to questions of transparency, access to information, and their activities. These issues were so relevant that virtually all Kazakhstani TV partners participating in the A2I content exchange broadcast these interviews either alone or as a hook in their news stories.

In addition to news programs and interviews, Internews also posted PSAs from the Mercy Volunteer Society on autism and adoption. A new online media partner, DVESTI, provided PSAs on cancer and its prevention in Kazakh and Russian for the exchange.

“Current Time: Central Asia” is a new, joint daily news production of Voice of America and Radio Liberty covering regional and international events. Its creators approached Internews in Kazakhstan in September 2015 seeking broadcast partners. Thanks to a connection made through Internews, the First North TV channel from Petropavlosvsk has begun broadcasting it.

For various technical reasons (most often problems with internet), four Kazakh partner stations are still not actively using the content exchange – TV-29 (Temirtau), Elnur TV (Sairam, South-Kazakhstan), Alau TV (Kostanai). They are planning to change their internet provider soon,

which should resolve their technical issues. A new TV station in Karaganda is currently broadcasting in a combined live TV/radio format and is not yet producing their own news. Channel TAN joined the project in May but dropped out in August 2015 after its leadership changed and reformatted TAN into a sports channel. However, new partners continue to join the exchange: in September 2015, Petropavlovsk.kz online newspaper and TV TDK-42 from Uralsk became A2I content exchange partners.

## KYRGYZSTAN

In an interim audit of the content exchange initiative in Kyrgyzstan (conducted by Internews in July 2015), Kyrgyzstani partners listed the following as reasons why they do not use the content exchange hub more often:

- Slow Internet speed – Internet is still a problem in the regions, especially when it comes to uploading/downloading content outside kg zone;
- Lack of staff time – partners find it difficult to assign an employee to sift through available content, watch content they might be interested in broadcasting, and package it for rebroadcast to their local audiences;
- Google Drive is inconvenient to use – uploading or downloading content from the Google Drive is slow, especially when it comes to “heavy” video materials;
- Language – according to respondents, there is a need for news from neighboring countries, in this case from Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. However, interesting materials are not always in a language that a partner’s audience understands. Partners cannot afford to pay for dubbing (from Kazakh or Tajik into Kyrgyz or Russian).
- Regularity and relevance of news features– if a news item appears on the Google Drive after being aired by another partner, it loses its relevance. Partners do not want to air outdated news items;
- Competitiveness – the content exchange partners do not see the point in exchanging content they can produce themselves. They are seeking breaking news and exclusive reports.
- Not aware of content exchange – it seems that regular email communication and even regular phone calls are not effective. Partners read, listen, agree and forget. Regular in-person, face-to-face meetings are required to ensure the effectiveness of content exchange.
- Some partners are already using other free FTP services like Namba and a government-run FTP server;<sup>2</sup>
- The Russian [Media Content Service](#) offers regular international news series for a very modest price (100 news stories per month (5 per day) for about 25K Roubles with a five-day free trial).
- Financially sustainable media outlets such as NTS are looking for exclusivity and are ready to pay for foreign or local content.

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<sup>2</sup> This government-maintained service provides access to all state TV channels. It is unclear if the service is open to other media because no mentions about or links to this FTP were found on official government websites. At the same time, private TV stations indicate that they can get video about state-run activities from this FTP (authorities’ interviews, video footage from their visits, meetings, etc.). Most probably that content is provided by authorities’ press services and is purely pro-government.



Taking into account the respondents' comments, Internews' team in Kyrgyzstan developed an [online curation platform](#) (designed to cover content from all three countries) intended to make the content exchange more convenient. The platform is updated on a daily basis and a [feature](#) that allows users to track updates more easily has been rolled out. Two interns were hired to monitor the Google Drive and FTP server for new content uploaded by the content exchange participants.<sup>3</sup> New content is monitored and announced on the platform and through the listserv to all content exchange participants from Kyrgyzstan. Feedback from partners on this new platform should be available next quarter.

Two additional media outlets from Kyrgyzstan joined the content exchange this quarter: Jash FM Radio and the Kyrgyz service of the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR).

## TAJIKISTAN

To date, a total of 13 media outlets in Tajikistan (TV, radio, and online) are participating in the content exchange and readily sharing content with one another. The main challenges they have mentioned relate to slow and expensive internet connections. During the reporting period, Radio Paivand (Union) in Khujand joined the content exchange and has already begun uploading its Russian-language radio show "Mamina Radostj" (Mother's Joy) about babies' health and advice on baby care.

Stations in Tajikistan are also using the content exchange hub to share content that they produce upon request from other partnering stations. For example, TV Isfara, which operates near Tajikistan's northern border with Kyrgyzstan, was producing a documentary film about Abdusamad Shomirsaidov, a well-known politician and member of Parliament. The company didn't have sufficient funds to cover the expenses of their own journalist to stay in the capital and requested help from TV SMT in Dushanbe (an additional video interview and footage of Dushanbe). SMT produced the video as requested and used the Google Drive content exchange hub this quarter to share it with TV Isfara.

The director of TV Mavji Ozod in Vose District, Tajikistan said: "We have only one journalist in our newsroom and we don't have enough funds to run daily newscasts, so we were doing them weekly. But after the launch of the [Google Hub] content exchange, we are using news episodes from across the country that have been uploaded to the hub and have increased our newscast frequency to four times per week."

### *Small grants within regional content sharing project*

Small grants encourage media outlets to participate in the content exchange, improve the quality of shared content, and promote production of content on socially important issues. Grant recipients can use small grants to fund travel for their crews to report stories in rural areas, update studio design to make their programs more attractive to audiences (and thus advertisers), and motivate staff to produce educational and social programs that may not be supported by

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<sup>3</sup> Internews will consider bringing on additional interns to monitor Kazakh- and Tajik-language content in future quarters if this pilot proves successful. However, the intern hiring process is complicated in Tajikistan by a government decree forbidding collaboration between universities and international organizations.

advertising. Grantees are required to share content produced with the help of small grants through the content sharing hub.



*Fragment of the TV Mavji Ozod news story. Khoja Nazriev, journalist (left) and Aslan Tumanov (right), a farmer of the cotton fields that were damaged by flooding*

The first round of grants mainly supported production of socially-oriented news stories for the content exchange. Mavji Ozod TV in Vose district, Tajikistan, used a small grant to cover travel expenses for their news team to prepare a video report on the situation with cooperative farms in remote areas of Khatlon province bordering Afghanistan after strong flooding in the spring and summer of 2015. The news episode informed viewers about government support to farmers who were affected by the flooding and work on straightening river mouths.

TV SM-1 received a small grant that they used to update the studio design for the “Oftobi Mehruboni” talk show, which it produces through advertising revenue. An attractive, modern set is an important element of quality programming, as it affects (even if subconsciously) viewers’ desire to watch a given program. The biweekly talk show on social, economic, cultural, and environmental issues has been produced for more than nine years, but the set had not been updated for many years.

During the small grant period, SM-1 produced and broadcast three episodes of the talk-show:

- [“The revenge that determines the nature of person,”](#) this episode was on the negative effects of revenge in society, family, between spouses, etc.
- [“Who is responsible for providing school supplies?”](#) In this episode, studio guests and experts discussed an official decree by the state department of education that forces parents to pay for school supplies for their children that are provided by the school, which violates citizens’ constitutional right to free choice in purchasing products and services. During the talk-show authorities denied such directives and asked parents to inform local law enforcement if school administrators require them to purchase supplies.
- [“Positive and Negative aspects of globalization.”](#) this episode was devoted to the effects of globalization in culture, economy, society, technology, etc. in Tajikistan.

Thanks to a small grant, First North in Petropavlovsk, Kazakhstan was able to produce pilot episodes in Kazakh and Russian of the “Matrix” TV program that Internews used to produce in-house. TV Accent (Lisakovsk) and Otyrar TV (Shymkent) now rebroadcast the program to their audiences.

The second round of the small grants competition was held during this reporting period. The following media outlets were selected to receive grants based on the strength of their submissions:

<b>Subawardee</b>	<b>Purpose of the award</b>	<b>Period of performance</b>
<b>Kazakhstan</b>		
Carat-Prognoz LTD (TV Company "First North"), Petropavlovsk	Production of one 30-minute educational TV program "Matrix" in Russian and Kazakh on internet and new IT technologies, how social media can be helpful in education and work; and other important IT issues in Kazakhstan	September 15, 2015 October 15, 2015
Baiyakov TVK-6 LTD (TV Company TVK-6)	Production of series of 30-40-minute educational TV program "Universe" in Russian on various scientific and environmental issues	September 15, 2015 October 15, 2015
Sobkor LLP (TV Company "Otyrar TV"), Shymkent	Production of series of 2-4-minute TV news stories in Russian and Kazakh on important socio-economic issues and problems of day-to-day life in Shymkent and neighboring areas	September 15, 2015 October 15, 2015
<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>		
PA "Aijaryk" (Community radio "Suusamy FM"), Chui oblast, Jayil district, Suusamy village	Production of series of 20-minute human rights-oriented radio programs in Kyrgyz to enhance legal literacy in Jayil district, Chui oblast	September 15, 2015 December 15, 2015
LLS "Capital info service" ("Capital" program), Bishkek	Production of series of 30-minute educational TV programs in Kyrgyz and Russian to enhance business literacy in Kyrgyzstan.	September 15, 2015 December 15, 2015
<b>Tajikistan</b>		
TV Company "Regar", Tursun-zade.	Production of series of 15-20-minute TV news stories in Tajik on social, economic, cultural, and environmental issues.	September 15, 2015 October 15, 2015
TV Company "Tiroz", Khujand	Production of series of 7-minute daily radio news stories in Russian on economic issues.	September 15, 2015 October 15, 2015
TV Company SM-1, Khudjand	Production of 90-minute talk show "Oftobi Mehruboni" that airs three times a month in Tajik on social, economic, cultural, and environmental issues.	September 15, 2015 October 15, 2015

The number of applicants for small grants did not increase significantly between the first and second grant rounds. Internews worked with USAID this quarter to find ways to ease reporting requirements so as not to overwhelm the grantees and attract more potential partners to participate in the small grant program. The third round of small grants will be based on fixed amount contracts that do not require financial reporting from the grantees. Payments will be based on meeting specific requirements of the award, and accountability will be based on performance and results. Internews will monitor implementation of contractual obligations to ensure that funds are used to produce the promised content.

#### *1.4. Online information exchange through NewReporter.org*

During Year 1, [NewReporter.org](http://NewReporter.org) provided media professionals with the latest trends, tools, and tips in media convergence, multimedia journalism, citizen journalism, mobile platforms, and social media engagement. The site has become the primary resource for promotion of A2I events and professional resources for the Central Asian media community. The site included announcements about trainings, conferences, contests, and webinars provided through this project and others. By the end of Year 1, a total of 1,486 articles had been posted reaching more than 64,000 users. The site's profile on Facebook had garnered more than 2,500 likes.

Internews had initially planned to hand over maintenance responsibilities for NewReporter.org to a local partner by the end of Year One of the project. An open competition among media and CSOs from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan was announced in August 2015. However, only one official application was received (from "The Youth of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" CSO in Dushanbe, Tajikistan). Internews extended the deadline but no additional applications had been received by the end of September 2015. Having discussed the situation with USAID, Internews decided to postpone the handover of the site due to limited interest from local partners.

Internews managers in all three countries will carry out a more targeted search for potential partners by contacting universities, international organizations, business and other entities that may be interested in taking over the online resource. Internews plans to meet with the single applicant "The Youth of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" to find out more about their capacity and ability to maintain NewReporter.org at its current level.<sup>4</sup>

### **Objective 2: Increased resilience of independent media to survive the impending treaty-mandated shift to digital broadcasting in 2015 across Central Asia**

#### *2.1. Coordinated advocacy and support on digital transition issues*

##### *Legal advocacy for a smooth and transparent digital transition*

###### *KAZAKHSTAN*

Kazakhstan was supposed to achieve full digital transition by June 17, 2015. However, according to unofficial information received in September 2015 from the Committee on Communication, Informatization and Information of the Ministry of Investment and Development, that deadline will be pushed back significantly due to budget constraints.

The first stage of digital transition was completed in 2012: digital broadcasting pilot areas have been established in Astana, Almaty, Zhanaozen, Karaganda, Zhezkazgan, and Temirtau with the installation of five transmitters with coverage of 23% of the population. The second stage was completed at the end of 2013: a total of 34 transmitters have been built in all 14 oblast capitals,

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<sup>4</sup> One more organization expressed its interest in Kyrgyzstan in October 2015. American University in Central Asia found NewReporter.org as a very good opportunity for students of its journalism department to gain practical experience. The university will submit an official application in the beginning of November 2015.

with coverage rising to 51% of the population. In 2014, 297 transmitters have been set up in oblasts bordering on neighboring countries (e.g. Almatinskaya, Zhambylskaya, East-Kazakhstan, and South-Kazakhstan oblasts), covering 72% of the population.

Implementation of the next stage of the digital transition is expected to take place in 2016. (The Republican Budget Commission did not budget any funding for digital transition work in 2015.) In the autumn of 2015, parliament will consider a proposed budget for digital reform from 2016-2018. There is a plan in place for building and renovation of 166 transmitters with coverage of 77% in 2016, in 2017 - 187 transmitters and 87%; 2018 - 138 transmitters and 95% coverage. Thus, it is likely that the transition to digital broadcasting in Kazakhstan will be completed in 2018 or even 2019.

This quarter, Internews continued meetings with the National Association for Television and Radio Broadcasters in Kazakhstan (NAT-KZ) regarding planned work on digital transition advocacy issues.

A NAT-KZ member meeting that had been planned to take place in September was postponed until December 2015 or January 2016 due to organizational problems. In addition to association membership issues, they intend to discuss their strategy with regard to digital transition activities. Internews managers will also attend the event to update NAT-KZ members about current projects and discuss opportunities to promote formation of a genuine national network of independent stations with joint programming, mutual production, common advertising and better cooperation during economic crisis.

### *KYRGYZSTAN*

On September 17, 2015, Media Policy Institute held a roundtable on “Digital broadcasting of Kyrgyzstan: questions & answers” with support from A2I and the “Global Campaign for Free Expression ARTICLE 19,” funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Thirty-two people participated, including 10 women and 22 men. This was the first time that government officials had met with representatives of private media outlets and donor organizations involved in the switchover process since the official launch of the switchover process in November 2014.

Presentations at the roundtable covered the following topics:

- State grant for the production of audiovisual content within the transition to digital broadcasting – Albina Kabyrbekovna Duyshenbieva, Deputy Minister of Culture, Information and Tourism;
- Measures taken to prevent customers from buying uncertified set-top boxes – Zainulla Ismailov, head of the State Department for Standardization and Certification;
- Draft law “On TV and Radio Broadcasting” – Ernis Mamyrganov, Deputy Minister of Transport and Communications;
- Updates on the activities of “Information Technologies” LLC (consortium of private broadcasters) – Jainak Usen, director of “Information Technologies” LLC.

Albina Kabyrbekovna the Deputy Minister of Culture, Information and Tourism, informed participants that 11 million Kyrgyz Soms (or US\$ 157,145) were provided for the production of domestic audiovisual content (including PSAs, talk shows, and a series of TV programs of

different genres). The main goal of this initiative is to generate socially significant and highly relevant content that will be broadcast on TV channels included in the social package. Five production studios produced 84 pieces of audiovisual content (in Kyrgyz and Russian) that were provided to and broadcast by TV/radio companies included to the social package. Representatives of private media outlets raised concerns about the transparency of the tender. They also noted that lower price offers were prioritized during the tender process, but lower prices often mean poorer quality. Private media representatives were asked to note their concerns in writing and provide them to the Ministry for consideration and further improvement of possible future state grant tenders.

As for future plans, the Deputy Minister said that 100 million Kyrgyz Soms (about US\$ 1.5 millions) are budgeted for digital transition needs in 2016 but distribution of funds depends on joint decision-making of all relevant government bodies. This was the first time that the state has provided funds for production of national audiovisual content in Kyrgyzstan. If practice shows that the state grant for production of domestic content was effective (presumably meaning whether PSAs impacted target audiences; state-funded programs were described in a way that pleased the authorities; etc.), then funds will be allocated for 2016.

Zainulla Ismailov reported that certification of set-top boxes is challenging because any private company or individual entrepreneur can import any kind of set-top boxes into the country and certification is not required at the border. Customs services can let equipment in if import permission is available. Due to the fact that the State Inspection for Ecological and Technical Security has only recently been formed, there is not yet any effective control over the import of set-top boxes. Mr. Ismailov said that only 10,000 set-top boxes have been certified to date and that an application to provide certificates of conformity for 300,000 more receivers was just filed with the State Department for Standardization and Certification.

Ernis Mamyrganov presented updates regarding the draft law On TV and Radio Broadcasting that was filed with the Government in May 2015. The Deputy Minister reported that the following results are expected to be implemented gradually by 2020 if the draft law is adopted:

- Introduce a clear distinction between the activities of operators and broadcasters;
- Change the mechanism of content regulation;
- All types of broadcasting will be regulated;
- Production of national audiovisual products would get real mechanisms for development (e.g. 50% of all broadcast content will have to be produced domestically, at least 50% will have to be in Kyrgyz, etc.);
- A platform for development of the national production industry will be created;
- Local broadcasters will gain an advantage over foreign broadcasters.

Some draft law provisions raised concerns among cable TV representatives, but the Deputy Minister noted that all provisions are negotiable. She said that media outlets are welcome to participate in the discussion and voice their opinions and justifications.

Esen Abduvaliev, an invited representative of the Government Apparatus, reported that the draft law is officially registered but review and consideration of draft laws in the Jogorku Kenesh has

been put on hold due to the parliamentary elections. Updates on the status of the draft law will be available only after the election in October 2015.

## TAJKISTAN



*The Director of the TV SM-1, Khujand, Tajikistan (left) sharing his experience on broadcasting in the state-owned multiplex in a test mode*

On September 30, 2015, the Association of Independent Broadcasters (AIB) with support from the Embassy of the United States in Tajikistan conducted a national conference on the “Current state of the transition to digital broadcasting in Tajikistan” at the republican press center in Dushanbe. (This conference was not supported by A2I but Internews monitored the proceedings to build on them in the A2I project and avoid duplication of efforts.) A total of 40 representatives of government agencies, parliament, lawyers, social scientists, and experts participated in the event. Several reports were presented at the conference including on legislative aspects, organizational and technical measures in the transition to digital broadcasting.

The participants discussed Tajikistan’s obligations regarding the complete transition to digital broadcasting by June 17, 2015, which was not fulfilled by responsible agencies. According to the Geneva 2006 agreement, each participating state can postpone the transition process but should provide justification and inform the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Representatives of the state communication agency, and the state-owned national operator Teleradiocom stated that Tajikistan did not inform the ITU about postponement.

Furthermore, the “State Program for the Transition to Terrestrial Digital Broadcasting for 2010-2015” wasn’t implemented due to lack of funds. Representative of Teleradiocom stated that it is developing a new state program for 2016-2020. As was the case with the old program, it is being developed without the participation of all stakeholders and even members of the working group established under the Committee on Transition to Digital Broadcasting. The conference participants strongly criticized Teleradiocom’s work on drafting the new state program without the participation of media organizations and the members of the working group. In response, the representative of Teleradiocom said that after drafting the new program, it will be sent to the Committee for review by the working group established under the Committee, where Teleradiocom also has a representative.

The requirement for licensing of audiovisual production in Tajikistan remains active despite a clause in Presidential Decree No. 691 from October 31, 2014 (“On the Program of Adjustment of the Economy of the Republic of Tajikistan Related to the Membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO)”) that refers to abolishment of licensing for audiovisual production. No amendments have yet been proposed that would actually abolish this requirement. Khoma’s lawyer said that the draft law with all necessary amendments were developed and presented on April 28, 2015, to the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Development of Tajikistan by Khoma and AIB, but no related action has been taken by the Ministry in last five months. According to Ms. Imomova, the draft law remains at the Ministry and has not been submitted to government agencies and other ministries for further review.



*Lawyer of CSO Khoma (left) during her presentation on the legal environment of the transition to the digital broadcasting in Tajikistan*

The conference participants developed a list of recommendations that was submitted to the government of Tajikistan for consideration and further adoption:

- The new state program on digital transition for 2016-2020 should be developed in collaboration with public media organizations, responsible government agencies and independent broadcasters; the working group established under the Committee should be considered the main moderator in development of the new program;
- The legislative basis should be updated to include the rights of independent broadcasters in the new period of the transition to digital TV (2016-2020);
- The state communication agency should inform the ITU about the postponement of the transition to digital broadcasting in Tajikistan until 2020;
- To support national content producers and fulfill Tajikistan obligations within the WTO, licensing of audiovisual production must be abolished;
- All stakeholders should be involved in developing and promoting the information campaign about the transition to digital broadcasting to the general population.

During the reporting period, Khoma was involved in conducting a feasibility study on the establishment of a single, converged regulator for telecommunication and broadcasting services in Tajikistan designed by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) office in Tajikistan. The study explores the feasibility of converging the two regulators (for telecommunication and broadcasting services) presently operating in Tajikistan (the Communication Service and the Committee on Television and Radio) into one single regulatory authority. Khoma analyzed Tajik legislation regarding potential convergence of the telecommunication and broadcasting regulators.



## *Support for independent broadcasters on making the digital switchover*

### *KAZAKHSTAN*

No activities took place under this component of the project in Kazakhstan this quarter due to the postponement of the digital transition. (See Legal Advocacy section above.)

### *KYRGYZSTAN*

Representatives of the consortium of private broadcasters were invited to the roundtable conducted by MPI on September 17, 2015. Jainak Usen, the newly appointed director of the “Information Technologies” consortium, shared the most recent updates on the status and activities of the consortium:

- At the moment “Information Technologies” consists of 21 media companies. TV/Radio Company “Osh TV” decided to leave the consortium because it was slated to be included in the social package (and was [officially included](#) in it as of September 25, 2015).
- Equipment for construction of the digital network of private broadcasters was purchased;
- One multiplex provided to the consortium is already operating in Bishkek and Chuy oblast. Eight private TV/radio companies are broadcasting through it in test mode;
- Digital broadcasting in southern Kyrgyzstan is challenging due to the lack of frequencies;
- Almost all members of the consortium would like to broadcast in Bishkek, i.e. regional TV/radio companies would like to increase their coverage;
- The second multiplex is reserved for private broadcasters but there are no developments to support thus far because the first one is still in development;
- The consortium plans to officially launch the digital network of private broadcasters by the end of 2015.



*Representatives of the consortium of independent broadcasters updating the roundtable participants on the operation of the consortium*

In addition, private broadcasters were given the opportunity to raise their concerns relating to the analog cut-off date. Parallel broadcasting in analog and digital formats implies double costs for private TV/radio companies because they have to pay double fees. Therefore, government representatives were asked to identify the date of full transition to digital broadcasting with cut-off of analog broadcast signals. Ernis Mamyrganov responded that the Government has decided to start targeted deactivation of analog transmitters from June 2016. There is no exact date of full transition to digital broadcasting, but most probably it will be postponed until 2018.

A resolution was drafted by the end of the roundtable and filed with the Government Apparatus. The resolution urges the Government to continue the state grant program for the production of national audiovisual content, resolve the issue with digital broadcasting of private TV/radio companies in southern Kyrgyzstan, consider the issue of certification of set-top boxes to ensure the import of quality equipment, and set the exact date of analog broadcast signal switch off.

After the end of this reporting period, Internews met with Mr. Usen, who provided additional [updates](#) on the operation of the consortium of private broadcasters. Information will be provided with the next quarterly report.

## TAJIKISTAN



*The Head of the Association of Independent Broadcasters during his presentation on legal regulations related to digital broadcasting at the roundtable in Dushanbe, Tajikistan*

This quarter, the Association of Independent Broadcasters (AIB) continued hosting its series of roundtables on the transition to digital broadcasting, holding three roundtables in Gorno–Badakhshan Autonomous Region, Sughd province, and in Dushanbe in association with the State Committee on TV and Radio Broadcasting of Tajikistan (the regulator) under its A2I subgrant agreement. The roundtables aimed to enhance interaction of independent broadcasters and government agencies regarding the future of independent TV and radio stations and broadcast media consumer rights protection. In total, 120 media professionals, government representatives, civic activists, and independent broadcasters participated in the events.

The responsible regional representatives of the state-owned national operator “Teleradiocom,” the State Committee on TV and Radio Broadcasting of Tajikistan (Committee), and AIB members presented their reports at the roundtables. The speakers focused their presentations on the legislative and technical implementation of Tajikistan’s obligations regarding digital broadcasting. The head of the AIB, spoke about legal regulations related to digital broadcasting in Tajikistan, which currently do not reflect the interests of private broadcasters. The survival of local independent broadcasters is under threat without support from the government.

Representatives from the state-owned national operator “Teleradiocom” (which is responsible for the technical aspects of digital switchover in Tajikistan) led the session on technical implications of the transition and specifically underlined that any private broadcaster operating in the country can be included in the first state-owned multiplex in test regime. To date, TV SM-1 and TV Azia, both operating in Khujand, have received a draft agreement from the operator which states that after the test period, broadcasting through the state-owned multiplex will cost independent broadcasters approximately US\$4.50 per hour. This price for the operator’s services is too high for independent broadcasters to pay and requires further negotiations to bring it down. (These began between the AIB and Teleradiocom after the roundtables.)

As a result of the roundtables, AIB developed recommendations for the Government of Tajikistan and for their adoption through the working group established under the Committee on transition to digital broadcasting. The recommendations included:

- low-income families need support from local government authorities and local businesses to obtain digital receivers (set-top boxes);
- increase public awareness regarding the process of transition to digital broadcasting through an information campaign and national public service announcements;
- discuss and adopt mandatory regulations regarding the digital switchover for independent broadcasters;

- abolish the licensing requirement for audio and visual production to encourage national content production;
- notify the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) about the postponement of the digital switchover in Tajikistan until 2017;
- provide technical support to independent TV stations in Tajikistan from local city/district/province state budgets to support the transition to digital broadcasting;
- provide training and specialized courses for qualified specialists working with independent broadcasters at the state-owned operator Teleradiocom;
- establish an independent TV and radio channel on the national level to increase the local audiovisual content.

There has not been any response to these recommendations from the government as of this writing. However, after the roundtables in Gorno–Badakhshan Autonomous Region, Sugd province, and Dushanbe:

- the responsible representatives of local hukumats (local government body) confirmed that the responsible local government agencies will initiate an information campaign through local state-owned newspapers and TV channels in cooperation with independent media outlets in order to increase public awareness regarding the process of transition to digital broadcasting.
- In addition, local government authorities in Gorno–Badakhshan Autonomous Region, Sugd province, and Dushanbe said they will determine the amount of funds required to partially support low-income families in the regions to obtain digital receivers. (Families will be required to cover the rest of the cost themselves.)
- Finally, government representatives invited AIB to cooperate on the development of a joint concept for financial support from the local hukumats (one of the recommendations was to exempt from local taxes and the funds could be redirected toward technical support for independent TV and radio stations in all three regions).

## *2.2. Support media outlets to utilize digital opportunities to expand and engage their audiences*

### **A2I Webinars**

#### *Year 1 Webinar Statistics*

##### *Number of participants by country*

	<b>KZ</b>	<b>KG</b>	<b>TJ</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
Oct-Dec 2014	0	0	0	0	0
Jan-Mar 2015	136	23	11	16	186
April-June 2015	166	48	90*	30	334
Jul-Sep 2015	53	43	20	55	171
					<b>TOTAL: 691</b>

\*There were 63 more people who attended the webinars at Internews office in Tajikistan. They were calculated separately due to unavailability of gender info.

*Number of participants by gender*

	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Oct-Dec 2014	0	0
Jan-Mar 2015	93	93
April-June 2015*	160	174
Jul-Sep 2015	95	76
		TOTAL: 691

\*There were 63 more people who attended the webinars from Internews office in Tajikistan. They were calculated separately due to unavailability of gender info.

*Webinars by date, topic, speaker and views on Newreporter.org*

	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Views on Newreporter.org</b>
1.	Jan 14, 2015	“Multimedia journalism for intermediate level”; Post on Newreporter.org: <a href="#">“Oxana Silantyeva: success of media is in cooperation with the audience”</a>	2,592 views
2.	Jan 28, 2015	“Virus video”; Post on Newreporter.org: <a href="#">“Secrets of virus video”</a>	2,625 views
3.	Feb 11, 2015	“Special projects on the Internet as a way to monetize content”; Post on Newreporter.org: <a href="#">“How to create and monetize special project on the Internet”</a>	2,423 views
4.	Feb 25, 2015	“Media in social networks”; Post on Newreporter.org: <a href="#">“Promotion of media in social networks”</a>	3,328 views
5.	Mar 11, 2015	“Services to create timelines”; Post on Newreporter.org: <a href="#">“Online services to create timelines”</a>	2,118 views
6.	April 2, 2015	<a href="#">“Longread — a new format of presenting information on the Internet ”</a>	1,624 views
7.	April 7, 2015	<a href="#">“Format requirements for a special report”</a>	2,422 views
8.	April 23, 2015	<a href="#">“Producing informational materials”</a>	1,803 views
9.	April 30, 2015	<a href="#">“Creation of interactive maps using Google Fusion Tables and BatchGeo”</a>	1,563 views
10.	May 14, 2015	<a href="#">“Mobile applications for media”</a>	892 views
11.	May 28, 2015	<a href="#">“How to make money on content”</a>	2,479 views

12.	June 23, 2015	Practical webinar “ <a href="#">Interactive infographics in 15 minutes</a> ”	2,061 views
13.	Sep 9, 2015	“ <a href="#">Advertising in crisis</a> ”	2,163 views
14.	Sep 22, 2015	“ <a href="#">New formats for new media</a> ”	2,686 views

### *Quarterly Webinar Data*

Webinars were not held in July and August 2015 due to the summer holiday period. Two webinars were offered in September 2015. The webinar on new media formats led by Galina Timchenko (formerly the editor-in-chief of Lenta.ru, now founder and editor-in-chief of the highly respected independent Russian-language news and analytical site operating out of Latvia, Meduza.io) was the most popular webinar of any Internews has offered under A2I so far, with over 140 people participating.

Topics of the webinar	Date	Total attendees	W	M	KZ	KG	TJ	Other
“ <a href="#">New formats for new media</a> ” – 2,686 views on Newreporter.org	Sep 22, 2015	151	89	62	45	46*	15	45
“ <a href="#">Advertising in crisis</a> ” – 2,163 views on Newreporter.org	Sep 9, 2015	35	15	20	8	12	5	10
TOTAL		171	95	76	53	43	20	55

*\*In addition to 31 registered participants, 15 more people attended the webinar from the Osh office.*

### *Feedback from participants in the webinars:*

“The webinar that left the strongest impression on me was [Galina] Timchenko’s. She’s a superstar professional for me, even though this was the first time in my life that I’d seen or heard her. Her webinar was powerful because of the information and nuances she shared. The webinar about special projects also stuck with me: that kind of information doesn’t get old...Webinars are like a toolbox with commentary from the developer on how to use this or that in order to get the most effective result. They also inspire and push [participants] to at least try out something new independently.” - Olga Faizullina, web editor for Alau (Kazakhstan).

“I try not to miss webinars that our colleagues run, because the speakers who discuss and demonstrate new tools cannot always come to Kazakhstan to hold a master class. Moreover, new media tools help me personally to create materials. This includes work with maps, online broadcasting, creation of viral videos, sales, advertising, production, infographics, and of course I want to mention the webinar of Galina Timchenko, “New formats for new media.” – said another participant from Kazakhstan.

“I am glad that the webinar on “Multimedia journalism for intermediate level” interested the audience that asked profound questions, gave examples from their own practice, and proposed to analyze their colleagues’ experience. The webinar is quite a hard format for interaction but I did not feel it that way at this time. It was interesting to communicate with the participants during the webinar and to continue the dialog on professional topics on Facebook.” – Oxana Silantyeva, multimedia trainer and expert on new media.

## **Newsroom 2.0 Media Convergence Training Program**

The last round of residencies was held at media outlets participating in the first year of the Newsroom 2.0 project this quarter.

In August 2015, Internews announced a competition among media outlets in the region to participate in the second round of the Newsroom 2.0 project, which will begin in October 2015. The list of new Newsroom 2.0 partners will be reported next quarter.



*Yntymak journalists listening to Galina Timchenko’s webinar on “New formats for new media”*

## **Objective 3: Professional Standards for Diverse and Sustainable Media Voices**

### *3.1. Increased Professionalism*

#### *KAZAKHSTAN*

In July 2015, Internews held remote consultations for managers of Orken TV (Balkhash) to decide on a training agenda for trainings in Russian and Kazakh. From August 19-24, 2015, coaches Denis Bevz (Tomsk, Russia) and Talgat Suyunbai (Almaty, Kazakhstan) conducted training for Orken TV on "Organization of the newsroom" according to the agenda recommended by Internews. The training was attended by six journalists (women) and four operators and an editor. Internews’ technical director, Ahmed Askharov, advised Orken TV on selection of professional lighting equipment, including drawing up the terms of reference and monitoring prices. Orken TV financed the travel, lodging, per diem, and training fees for Bevz and trainer Talgat Suyunbai.

In the same month, Internews organized remote consultations for the Media Support Fund of Kazakhstan regarding organization of their new training center with the involvement of trainer Denis Bevz. In August 2015, Bevz provided a consultation for the Media Support Fund in Almaty regarding the training center’s curriculum, providing examples of training programs and modules.



*Talgat Suyunbai explaining the aspect of newsroom organization*

In August 2015 Internews donated four of its old computers monitors to Public Television Kyzylorda.

#### *KYRGYZSTAN*

Kloop Media held its Summer Journalism School this quarter. Over the course of three months, participants learned to write news items, shoot photo essays, host and edit a radio show, shoot videos, and broadcast video live. Six students (5 women and a man) were supported to attend the program under A2I.

The school concluded on September 12, 2015, with the final module on media law. Kloop invited Altynai Isaeva from Media Policy Institute as a trainer for this module. She introduced the law On Access to Information and taught participants how to send requests for information to public officials.

- Baktygul Rakymbaeva from Bishkek covered a recent [initiative of MPs to control the Internet](#) and [football matches of the Kyrgyz National team within AFC Cup-2016 qualifiers](#). She showed a particular interest in radio and currently hosts a live radio show at Kloop. “Thanks to the school, I interviewed politicians, businessmen, and activists,” she says.
- Aisuluu Berdalieva from Kara-Balta covered the initiative of the government [to root out corruption by sending in agents to offer bribes to public officials and see who takes the bait](#).
- Aisuluu Kasymova from Toguz-Bulak village in Issyk-Kul province [produced stories about the resignation of the Ombudsman](#).
- Azamat Karabotoev from Bakai-Ata village in Talas province showed strong interest in video production. He covered a recent fraud scandal and court case involving popular singer Omar [and managed to report exclusive details directly from the court](#). Azamat became the first student of the school to try live video broadcasting.

Alumni of Kloop’s School of Journalism can continue writing stories for Kloop as volunteers in order to practice their reporting skills and build their experience.

Kloop’s autumn school of journalism started on September 15, 2015, after a recruiting campaign that involved online announcements and presentations in Bishkek universities and schools. Kloop picked five people to participate in the school with support from the A2I project. Eldiyar Arykbaev (Kloop’s editor-in-chief) led the school’s first module on newswriting.

Also this quarter, Kloop completed development of an open-source mobile-application template, which will be posted online next quarter. The template will promote better access to information by giving users the opportunity to collect RSS feeds from various information and news agencies, thus simplifying the process of information search and exchange. The template also

enables users (e.g. CSOs without a professional IT specialist) to quickly create a user-friendly mobile version of a WordPress website. Kloop will hold trainings for media professionals and civic activists on its use next quarter. (The training was originally planned to be held this quarter but had to be postponed due to the campaign and parliamentary elections, which occupied the attention of media and CSO professionals and made it difficult for them to attend a week-long training.)

## TAJKISTAN

### *Training of Tajik-Speaking Media Trainers*

On July 20-24, 2015, Khoma organized a training-of-trainers (ToT) for ten Tajik-speaking media professionals in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. (See Annex 5 for the full list of participants.) The ToT aimed to establish a pool of national trainers capable of providing specialized in-person trainings, webinars, and online remote mentoring. The five-day ToT agenda included sessions on different aspects of communication with adult audiences, methods and styles of interactive education, skills for effective presentations, and time management while conducting trainings and workshops.

Independent trainer Gulru Azamova (Dushanbe, Tajikistan) and Erzhan Suleimenov, Internews' Country Director in Kazakhstan and a well-known media producer and media expert, led the ToT. Ms. Azamova taught participants about information and skills needed for educating adult audiences, while Mr. Suleimenov focused on the professional and technical aspects of participants' proposed training modules.

The training program included theoretical background with individual and group practical activities. The ToT covered the following topics:

- specifics of training for adults;
- interactive training methods;
- training for media: from simple to complex;
- basics of media production;
- methods of searching for unique subjects;
- developing "passports" (short summaries) for specialized media training.

Participants also learned how to design a training agenda and module, as well as basic skills on how to record/conduct interviews, edit video, write text stories for TV and the Internet as a fundamental context for their future training modules. The majority of the training participants had strong media experience that helped them easily understand the structure and system of the trainings.

However, the main focus was on developing training modules for future trainings. By the end of the ToT, participants were required to present a draft module of a one-day training, which will be further developed after completion of the training in cooperation with the ToT trainers.

The main challenge was the different media specializations of the training participants, which resulted in low interest in the session on TV production. Some training participants knew



Russian poorly, so translation was provided as necessary during the sessions led by Mr. Suleimenov, who does not speak Tajik.

To further develop the professional skills of ToT participants following the ToT, trainers proposed that Khoma use online distance learning with professional international media trainers to build the capacity of the ToT participants: online collaboration services and a Facebook group should be launched to allow participants to share their experiences, keep the training modules updated, and share training tools, training programs, etc. When Khoma invites professional media trainers to conduct trainings in Tajikistan, the ToT participants should be included as assistant trainers. Khoma should also consider sending the ToT participants to lead trainings in other countries in the role of assistant trainers in order to build their skills in working with diverse audiences. Khoma should develop a training curriculum for working with CSOs, commercial and government entities to provide additional opportunities for trained trainers to use their skills and maintain a sustainable (paid) training program. So far, face-to-face meetings and e-mail communication between ToT participants have begun.

Khoma plans to host the first trainings to be delivered by ToT alumni in November-December 2015 within the new curriculum. Internews will also invite ToT participants to shadow professional trainers and then lead sections of workshops and webinars scheduled within A2I project activities in Year 2. Internews' Regional Media Business Advisor, Olga Groznaya, in association with Khoma will develop the first Tajik-language webinars, which will also be led by ToT alumni.

#### *Develop a mid-career training center for journalists*

To support Khoma's initiative to host a media training center for Tajik-language journalists, Internews invited Corina Cepoi, Internews' Country Director in Kyrgyzstan and a well-known media expert who developed a similar training center in Moldova, to conduct an initial capacity assessment for Khoma's training center from June 28-July 5, 2015. The assessment will help Khoma to design and implement a plan to diversify its funding by eventually offering open and fee-based trainings. Ms. Cepoi met with Khoma staff to determine the training center's needs and its technical capacity to deliver long-term training programs. She also interviewed local journalists, donor organizations and media public associations to assess the current state of the media market in Tajikistan. Khoma will address the proposed recommendations in their workplan and development strategy for the next year.



*ToT Alumni' first meeting at CSO Khoma office after the training*

### ***3.2. National Networking***

#### ***Sharing and distribution of independent media content through online file-sharing***

Regular production of the "News of the Regions" TV program began on September 1, 2015. Through this initiative, Internews curates and packages news clips provided by TV partner stations from several regions of Kazakhstan into a roughly 15-minute program including an average of 5-6 news items. It aims to address the concerns of station managers about

broadcasting news items from other regions—they did not have the time or staff to comb through available content searching for something that would be interesting to their local audiences and find a way to fit it logically into their regular news programming. They are much more likely to share ready-for-broadcast content that is attractively packaged.

In September 2015, 21 episodes of “News of the Regions” in Russian and 11 episodes in Kazakh were posted on the A2I Google Drive content sharing hub and on Internews’ FTP server. (Production of episodes in Kazakh began two weeks later than Russian, while the team was seeking a qualified announcer and Kazakh-speaking editor). After the first episode, which included segments from Petropavlovsk, Kyzylorda, and Shymkent, additional TV channels began contributing their content to the program and broadcasting it - Channel 5 (Karaganda), Ridder-Inform (Ridder), Rika TV (Aktobe) and TEC-6 (Semey).

In September 2015, Internews in Kazakhstan met with the head of the Kazakh TV distribution company Imma Global, Zhudyz Kaden (the former program director of Khabar Agency and CEO of Channel 31), who has extensive experience working with Turkish TV channels, and is an expert on the formation of policy networks and purchase of TV content. During the meeting, Ms. Kaden said that in order to save positions in the market, Kazakhstan regional TV should take the following steps:

- Consolidate the budget for the purchase of TV content;
- Consolidate the efforts and budgets for the production of TV formats;
- Take steps to create a consortium of TV stations to form a single broadcasting network.

### ***Nurture development of national networks of independent TV stations***

#### *Social network analysis of partner media outlets*

During the reporting period, Internews analyzed the current level of communication and collaboration between A2I partners in three target countries on the national and regional levels. The most active participants of A2I project activities, including the content exchange, Newsroom 2.0 initiative, regional media conference, and the Innovation Lab, were included in the analysis.

The findings of this analysis will allow Internews to better design its activities for strengthening collaboration between all stakeholders in the region’s media community. Internews’ media convergence and business advisors will use results of the analysis to deliver targeted assistance in improving collaboration between A2I partners, which may help increase coproduction activities, raise additional funds for implementing social projects, and facilitate joint advocacy for improved legal and regulatory environment in the region. A list of media-related projects implemented by international organizations, as well as media support activities conducted by CSOs, could be compiled and distributed through Internews’ listerv. In addition, the list would include relevant contact details to be more useful. Media outlets will thus be better informed and thus gain more opportunities for funding, capacity building, legal support, and building relationships. Finally, the analysis will help Internews plan network-building activities during national and regional events.

## Surveyed partners:

<i>Kazakhstan</i>	<i>Kyrgyzstan</i>	<i>Tajikistan</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Alau TV, Kostanay;</li><li>● Kogam TV, Kyzylorda;</li><li>● Orken Nedia, Balkhash;</li><li>● First North, Petropavlovsk.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Zanoza.kg (ex-team of Vecherniy Bishkek), Bishkek;</li><li>● Yntymak, Osh;</li><li>● Bashat TV, Osh</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Regar TV, Tursunzade;</li><li>● Mavdji Ozod, Kulyab;</li><li>● Tiroz, Khudjand.</li></ul>

The partners were asked to rate the level of their cooperation with other partners (on a scale of 0-5), the frequency of communication, means of communication, and type of cooperation (e.g. financial, technical, etc.) with media support organizations (CSOs), other media outlets, and international organizations.<sup>5</sup>

## Findings

### *Kazakhstan*

- Most of the surveyed partners have an excellent or good level of cooperation with CSOs that provide trainings, consultations or legal support to media.
- The partners communicate with CSOs (Internews Kazakhstan and NAT Kazakhstan) once or more times per week, and with other CSOs once every two months or once per quarter. Communication with international organizations is sporadic – twice a year or less. With other media outlets, the partners are in contact an average of once per quarter;
- The partners prefer to communicate with CSOs through email or phone calls, with international organizations through email, and with other media outlets generally through personal meetings or phone conversations;
- Partners cooperate with CSOs most often on fundraising, financial aid, consulting, and digital transition issues. Cooperation with international organizations is related exclusively to financial support and grant opportunities. With other media outlets, the partners cooperate on co-production of content, exchange of experience, consultations and, in some cases, on content exchange within the A2i project;
- The analysis revealed that cooperation of media outlets with the international donor community is weak in Kazakhstan. This is explained by the fact that media outlets, as

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- <sup>5</sup> Level of communication was measured on a scale from 5 to 0, where 5 stands for “excellent”, 4 – “good”, 3 – “satisfactory”, 2 – “poor”, and 0 – “not applicable” (not cooperating or does not know);
  - Frequency of communication was measured through the following indicators: “once or more times per week”, “twice a month”, “once per quarter”, “once per half year”, “once per year” and “not applicable” (does not communicate or does not know);
  - Such options like email, phone, fax, and in-person communication were used to measure means of communication;
  - Type of cooperation measured the purpose of cooperation of media outlets with other organizations – whether it is financial (fundraising, grants, joint business or award projects and etc.), or technical (consultations, mutually beneficial services, co-production, participation or foundation of associations, consortiums, etc.).

commercial entities, cannot participate in the majority of grant competitions. Internews addresses this issue through production grants as well as regional events where media, CSOs and international organizations can build relationships with each other.

### *Kyrgyzstan*

- Surveyed partners cooperate best with other media and media CSOs located in the same oblast or city. Cooperation with international organizations is uneven. Thus, Zanoza.kg and Yntymak are aware of almost all international organizations and cooperate with them at least rarely. However, Bashat TV indicated that it is not aware of any international organizations besides Internews. One example of regional cooperation was cited by Yntymak, which included the Tajikistani TV/radio company “Tiroz” into the list provided by Internews but rated its cooperation with that station as poor and requiring improvement;
- Regional media outlets communicate better with media outlets and CSOs located in their area and lack cooperation and communication with those located in the capital. Media outlets that are located in the capital or are receiving more or less stable support from the international community are aware of media, CSOs and international organizations operating in the country and communicate with them at least once per quarter;
- The most preferred means of communication are e-mail and phone conversations;
- Cooperation with other media and CSOs is mainly technical (consultations, exchange of experience, co-production, etc.). As an exception, Zanoza.kg indicated that their cooperation with other media, CSOs and international organizations is associated with informal or formal meetings and discussions. Cooperation with international organizations is typically linked to fundraising and financial support;
- The analysis revealed that cooperation among media outlets and CSOs depends on regional dimensions and past experience. Cooperation is strong on the oblast level but not on the national or regional levels. Cooperation is more likely to happen if representatives of media outlets and CSOs know each other personally. International organizations implementing media projects in Kyrgyzstan are not well-known or not known at all.

### *Tajikistan*

- In general, the analysis indicated that partners have good cooperation with other media outlets and local CSOs. Cooperation with international organizations is satisfactory.
- Communication with media outlets is more frequent than with CSOs and international organizations. The partners typically communicate with other media outlets once or more times per week;
- The most preferred means of communication are email and phone conversations;
- Cooperation between the partners and other media outlets is typically related to technical assistance (co-production, consultations, exchange of experience, content exchange, etc.). As in the other target countries, the partners apply to international organizations for funding through grant opportunities;
- The analysis revealed very good relations and solidarity between media outlets in Tajikistan, which is also evidenced by the active participation of Tajikistani media in the A2I content exchange project.

### *3.3. Diversity of Media Voices – Kyrgyzstan*

During the reporting period, Yntymak produced 33 “Munavvar Kun” TV programs in the Uzbek language. 26 of them have been uploaded on the YouTube and on the site yntymak.kg.

The program is an informational and interactive platform for Uzbek-speaking audiences in the region for the proposal and discussion of social, cultural and legal issues. This is accomplished through interviews with local experts and viewers. Viewers’ call-ins were received after each program, where they expressed their opinion on the program. Most calls were received from women with positive feedbacks. Thus, there were 150 telephone calls (99 from women and 51 from men).

Viewers suggested new topics about the issue of public transport for disabled, observance of sanitary norms on meat market, suggested the names of local artists to be invited to the studio. Besides, the audience asked to do some more releases about the work of Navoi and Babur poets, asked the address and phone number of children's rehabilitation center "Smile."

Representatives of culture, education, sports and law were invited to the program. During the reporting period 50 people (7 women, 38 men, and 5 children) participated in the program. Among them were Hasan Saidov, a local painter; Yokutai Sharapova, a young Uzbek artist; Karamat Nishanbaeva, member of the municipal women's council; Shuhrat Azimov, a famous local humorist; Muzaffar Kaharov, a local urologist; Rasuljon Uraimjanov, national actor of Kyrgyzstan.

Topics are identified by viewers, who offer and vote for them on social media accounts of Yntymak. In addition, new topics are selected from previous programs that have been aired and which need to be continued and followed up. Program staff also monitor social situation in the community and offer new topics to the editors of the program.

During the reporting period, Yntymak faced problems with uploading content to its YouTube channel. So, the Internet users could watch some “Munavvar Kun” programs on yntymak.kg only. The website’s capacity is not enough to store sizable video; therefore, Yntymak will upload all programs once the issue with YouTube is fixed.<sup>6</sup>

During the reporting period, Yntymak faced some difficulties with changing the studio décor. Due to the fact that ‘Munavvar Kun’ concentrates on three topics – women, social issues and music, decoration of the studio needs to be changed frequently. Yntymak looks for opportunities to resolve this issue. Internews’ facilities in Osh are always available for Yntymak and have been offered as one of the options.

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<sup>6</sup> The issue was resolved in October 2015.

## Objective 4: Improved Legislative and Policy Environment

### 4.1. Advocacy for an improved legal and regulatory environment for media

#### *Law on Access to Information*

The most notable event this quarter was the adoption by the Mazhilis of the Parliament of Kazakhstan of the draft law "On access to information" and corresponding amendments to current laws on access to information issues.

The adoption by the Mazhilis (lower chamber) usually guarantees its full adoption. The Senate (higher chamber) will review it in October 2015 and then the president will sign it. The adoption of the law "On access to information" is an important step for Kazakhstan. A2I subgrantee Internews Kazakhstan initiated establishment of a CSO coalition in October 2014 (previously worked jointly in 2013) which, with significant support from international organizations (the UN system in Kazakhstan, OSCE/ODIHR, OSCE Program Office in Astana) and recognized international experts (including Toby Mendel, the executive director of the Centre for Law and Democracy), took part in developing and advocating for the adoption of this draft law in the Kazakhstani Parliament.

Before the relevant draft laws ("On access to information" and "On introducing amendments and additions to some legislative acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on issues of access to information") were passed to the Mazhilis, Internews Kazakhstan's lawyer Olga Didenko organized a panel of experts in the field to review draft laws, including international experts.

Internews Kazakhstan played a key role in bringing international and local organizations and experts together in a coalition and at specific events to coordinate development and refinement of drafts of the law, as well as related expert opinions, analyses, and reports. They coordinated the efforts of these various groups during the informational campaign about the draft law On Access to Information, meetings with members of the Mazhilis regarding the law, related working group meetings, and preparation of expert opinions and other commentary. In the summer of 2015, the following activities took place:

- **Consolidated expert assessment of the draft law "On access to information" (as it stood on April 28, 2015) by the UN system in Kazakhstan.** The assessment was prepared through the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF, which unites all UN agencies) for the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2010-2015, particularly to achieve result III. "Effective state administration, including strengthening institutional potential, civil society and Media and also drawing attention to human rights"<sup>7</sup>.
- **Expert opinion on draft law "On access to information" and corresponding additions and amendments in other legislative acts.** This expert opinion was prepared by the OSCE/ODIHR with consultation from the OSCE Representative bureau for Freedom of Media.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Documents is available at: [http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc\\_id=39471072](http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=39471072)

<sup>8</sup> Expert opinion is available at: <http://legislationline.org/ru>, [http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc\\_id=38247205](http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=38247205)

- **Analysis of the draft law "On access to information."** The analysis was prepared by an expert through an agreement with the Legal Policy Research Centre (LPRC)<sup>9</sup>;
- **Expert opinion on draft laws "On access to information" and "On introducing amendments and additions to some legislative acts of the RoK on issues of access to information,"** prepared by Mr. Mikhail Tyunin, through agreement with Internews Kazakhstan.<sup>10</sup>
- **Recommendations of CSO to the draft law "On access to information."** Recommendations were prepared by the Institute for Strategic Research and Projects, Legal Policy Research Centre (LPRC), Internews Kazakhstan, International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (representative office in Kazakhstan), and Mr. Igor Loskutov.<sup>11</sup>

In the autumn of 2015, several additional expert opinions on the two draft laws were prepared. Internews Kazakhstan selected experts to contribute to the assessments, sought financing for them, and facilitated publication and presentation of the results of these expert assessments. The most important among them were the following:

1. Comments to draft laws on access to information prepared by Mr. Toby Mendel - Executive director of the Centre for Law and Democracy (Canada)<sup>12</sup>;
2. Legal review (conducted by the Institute of Legal Assessment, Almaty, Kazakhstan)<sup>13</sup>;
3. Analysis of the draft law of the RoK "On access to information" according to RTI indicators, prepared by the UNESCO Cluster office and Legal Policy Research Centre (LPRC).<sup>14</sup>

Internews Kazakhstan's lawyer also conducted research on additional issues: on exercising of the three part test to limit access to information; issues of responsibility and appealing actions (and inaction) and decisions of state officials; issues of service information.

Before discussing the draft laws in the working group in the Mazhilis, the members received expert assessments and recommendations on specific issues. They included:

1. **Extensive exceptions from the scope of law.** Large categories of information have been excluded from the scope of the law, e.g. archive information. **Absence in the draft law of a single legal instrument that would allow citizens to find out the justification for limiting access to information (the "three part test").** The absence of such an instrument will enhance the risk that publicly valuable information may be limited unreasonably, illegally, and for an indefinite period of time.
2. **The draft law provides too much time for government bodies to provide requested information** - from 15 to 30 days.
3. **Absence of real mechanisms for citizens to access information and to open sessions of government bodies to the public.** Despite the fact that the law states that sessions of collegial bodies ought to be open to the public, it does not contain any mechanism to

<sup>9</sup> Analysis is available at: [http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc\\_id=35452348](http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=35452348)

<sup>10</sup> Expert opinion on available at: [http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc\\_id=39047395](http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=39047395)

<sup>11</sup> Recommendations are available at: [http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc\\_id=33886820](http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=33886820)

<sup>12</sup> Document is available at: [http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc\\_id=36723645](http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=36723645)

<sup>13</sup> Document is available at: [http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc\\_id=30791337#sub\\_id=218](http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=30791337#sub_id=218)

<sup>14</sup> Analysis is available at: [http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc\\_id=32387437](http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=32387437)

make sure that happens. Representatives of civil society have expressed the need for such a mechanism to be developed urgently and set into law.

4. **Absence of mechanisms for promotion of the law.** CSO representatives have noted that the absence in the draft law of even minimum obligations regarding its promotion may lead to the public being uninformed about their rights under the new law and the procedures and forms required to submit requests for information, as well as state officials being unaware of what the law requires them to do if they receive requests. These factors may lead to ineffective implementation of legislation on access to information in practice.
5. **Provisions on responsibility and appeal.** The draft law specifies that violations of the right to access information are punishable by a fine, but the fee is fairly small: 30 MCI (monthly calculation index) (approximately US\$210) for state officials and, in case of causing harm to citizens' rights and legal interests, 100 MCI (slightly more than US\$700). CSOs monitoring the progress of the draft law have noted that setting the fee so low may lead to impunity and a negligent attitude on the part of state officials toward their obligation to provide access to information.
6. **Absence of independent administrative control for ensuring implementation of laws on access to information.**
7. Procedures for providing answers to written requests, costs, conducting open sessions of government bodies, etc.

While the draft laws were being considered within the Parliament, Internews Kazakhstan with Mazhilis deputies and other CSO Coalition members conducted an international scientific-practical conference "Access to information and public participation as a factor in ensuring the transparency and efficiency of public bodies" on September 25, 2015 in Astana.

Several international experts from OSCE, UNDP, Hungary and Slovenia shared experiences and presented their recommendations to the draft laws "On Access to Information" and "On amendments and additions to some legislative acts of Kazakhstan on the issues of access to information". Internews Kazakhstan organized the first session of the conference, which was dedicated entirely to access to information issues. Experts from the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights as well as ministers of information from Hungary and Slovakia took part in the session. The Conference was co-funded by the OSCE Programme Office in Astana, the Legal Council of the Nur Otan Party, the Legislative and Judicial Reform Committee of the Mazhilis of the Parliament, and the CSO Legal Policy Research Centre with the support of the British Embassy.

In general, the discussion of draft laws on access to information was fruitful and resulted in the introduction of a number of positive amendments to the draft laws indicated above.

Participation of CSOs (including A2I subgrantee Internews Kazakhstan) in the Mazhilis working group on the two draft laws had a positive impact. Some provisions of the draft laws were amended to bring them closer in line with international standards, which will increase the transparency of the government and other holders of information and promote implementation of citizens' constitutional right to receive and distribute information by any method not prohibited by the law.



The main proposals of the CSO coalition that were accepted into the laws as a result of their participation in the relevant Mazhilis working group included:

- Procedure of appeal in case of noncompliance of state officials in the sphere of access to information;
- Establishment of a Commission on access to information;
- Increasing the fine from the equivalent of 30 to 200 times the monthly reference index (currently 1,984 KZT– about US\$6.90 at the time of writing) specified in the law for state officials convicted of violating laws on access to information.

However, not all recommendations of experts and the CSO coalition were supported. The law still doesn't require maximum disclosure of information from state bodies; and exceptions from scope of law are extensive.

Internews Kazakhstan plans to continue working to improve the law On Access to Information and monitoring its implementation, as well as work on related issues regarding access to information for journalists. They plan to cooperate further with the OECD and the Open Government Partnership to push Kazakhstan toward adoption of best practices in providing free access to public information. Future work will include development and refinement of regulations further clarifying aspects of the law On Access to Information, serving as experts and trainers in informative and educational events around access to information issues, and monitoring of implementation of the law On Access to Information to identify and work to correct gaps and flaws.

#### *Amendments to the Civil Procedure Code of Kazakhstan*

The Mazhilis also adopted a new Civil Procedure Code that includes significant changes from the previous one.<sup>15</sup> From now on, legal claims about protection of personal non-property rights (e.g. libel and defamation suits), where the majority of defendants are journalists or media outlets, require the plaintiff to pay a tax in order to file them (1% of the claimed sum for physical entities and 3% for legal entities). Internews and other media support organizations also provided a great amount of efforts to adopt this Code and believe that this change should significantly decrease the number of claims filed in Kazakhstan for protection of personal non-property rights against journalists and media and may also decrease the size of such claims when they are filed.

According to data of the International Foundation for Protection of Freedom of Speech "Adil Soz," 61 complaints and suits on protection of honor and dignity against journalists and media were filed between January and July 2015. The total compensation for moral damages requested came to 388,400,000 tenge (approximately US\$1,368,000) (including claims, which are under consideration – 294 million tenge). Claims included 19 from state officials, 17 from legal entities, and 25 from citizens<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> The president signed the law in November 2015 and it will enter into force as soon as it is published.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.adilsoz.kz/politcor/show/id/153>

## Activities in reporting period

Type of activity	Venue	Date	Participants	Outcome/Result
<b>KAZAKHSTAN</b>				
1. Participation in sessions of the working group on developing draft law "On access to information" and draft law "On introducing amendments and additions to some legislative acts on issues of access to information" in the Mazhilis of the RoK	Astana	September 2015	Deputies of the Mazhilis Parliament of the RoK, representatives of CSOs, experts, representatives of state bodies	Provisions that meet international standards and principles on freedom of information (the responsibility of officials for restricting the right of access to information, the procedures to appeal misconduct of holders of information, the establishment of the commission on access to information, etc.) were included to the draft law on access to information.
2. Meeting with Parliament faction of the Democratic party "Akzhol". Presentation of the draft law "On access to information" and its amendments.	Astana	September 15, 2015	Representatives of CSOs, international organizations, deputies of the Mazhilis of the Parliament of the RoK, members of the "Akzhol" party	Cooperation with the parliamentary faction of the political party "Ak Zhol" was established. Deputies of this party introduced about ten amendments to the draft law on access to information – seven of them were accepted.
3. Launching international conference "Access to information and public participation	Astana	September 25, 2015	Representatives of international organizations, experts,	Deputies of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan were

as a factor of ensuring transparency and effectiveness of state bodies activities"			Parliament deputies, representatives of Media, CSOs and state bodies.	provided with international experts' examination of relevant bills. Following the discussions, substantial changes were made to access to information related bills. For example, decision was made to establish the commission on access to information.
4. Working meeting of Almaty-based CSOs. Presentation of the draft law "On access to information".	Astana	September 30, 2015	Representative of the Almaty city CSOs	Civil society activists were informed about the procedures, mechanisms and forms of obtaining public information from the various holders of information. Information was provided about the new forms of the government accountability to the public.

**KYRGYZSTAN**

A2I subgrantee the Media Policy Institute (MPI) continued to participate in the working group on the development of legal acts designed to restrict access to extremist information. The working group has been developing regulations that would allow state authorities (State Committee for National Security and the Ministry of Internal Affairs) to combat extremism through extrajudicial blocking of online resources that contain material alleged to be “extremist.” During the reporting period, MPI lawyers developed an explanatory note for the bill containing amendments to the law "On Countering Extremism." In this document, Media Policy Institute suggested deleting the concept "to carry out terrorist activity" from the definition of “extremist activity” because it relates to terrorist activities and should be governed by the applicable law. Also, MPI recommended clarifying the appeal procedure and indicate the possibility of an appeal to a higher prosecutor in accordance with the law "On Prosecutor's Office." Supplemented the

Law (Article 13) with a new section that gives the court the power to temporarily restrict access to information to ensure that interim measures are applied. Generally, MPI believes that its recommendations, if adopted into the law, will allow law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and courts to fight the spread of extremist materials in any information medium, including the Internet, more effectively and on the basis of the court decision and by means of appropriate legal instruments. It will allow governmental authorities to require the holders or distributors of information (including such giants as YouTube) to remove and/or block illegal content. The law allows blocking of materials that the court has found to be extremist and which are thus not authorized for distribution in the Kyrgyz Republic. The law will allow the blocking of such information in a timely manner and on the basis of a judicial act through necessary legal instruments.

At the moment, members of the working group have sent the package of documents to the Office of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic. After that, the documents will be submitted to the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic. After adoption of the bill, Media Policy Institute will continue its work with the working group regarding implementation of the law.

In late August 2015, Media Policy Institute prepared and posted a [memo](#) to media managers and journalists regarding their coverage of the Kyrgyzstani parliamentary elections, which will take place on October 4, 2015. The memo highlighted issues of participation of individual media outlets in various stages of the election campaign, including the procedure for accreditation of media representatives with the Central Election Commission; the procedure for providing broadcast airtime to political parties; the participation of websites in the campaign; rights and responsibilities of journalists during the election campaign and responsibility for violations of electoral legislation. MPI posted the memo on their website and sent it to the Central Election Commission of the Kyrgyz Republic.

## TAJIKISTAN

Khoma continues collaboration with other local media support organizations and international organizations on various media-related issues. On July 27-28, 2015, Khoma participated in the annual preparatory meetings of the OSCE Human Dimension on "Current issues in the field of human rights in Tajikistan." The annual meeting of the OSCE Office in Tajikistan before the Human Dimension meeting in Warsaw serves as an open forum to address pressing issues of human rights and the rule of law. During the meeting, participants discussed the status of various human rights issues in Tajikistan, including freedom of expression and women's participation in public and political life, among many others. Khoma advocated the importance of the freedom of expression as a crucial human right in an open and democratic society.

Specifically, Khoma and other public media organizations (the Tajik Media Council, the National Association of Independent Media of Tajikistan, and AIB) requested clarification from the representatives of the Government of Tajikistan on the Protocol by which the government nominated the National Information Agency Khovar (the Agency) as the exclusive source of information regarding all government events and comments, that restricts access to information for independent media. On September 21, 2015, Nuriddin Karshiboev, Chairman of the National Association of Independent Media of Tajikistan raised the discussed issues at the Annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting of OSCE in Warsaw.

On July 29, 2015, Khoma participated in a roundtable on the “Protection of freedom of expression in Central Asia” organized by the National Association of Independent Media of Tajikistan with the support of the international organization “Article 19” and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway. The event was held to discuss and prepare a contribution to the "Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights," including collection of materials to be included in the final version of the consolidated report. Khoma agreed to participate in the preparation of the report and provide necessary information regarding freedom of expression, libel and defamation in Tajikistan.

On August 13, 2015, Khoma participated in the first meeting of the new Government Council for the Development of National Cinematography (Council). The Council was established under the leadership of the Deputy Prime Minister of Tajikistan, Marhabo Jabor. The Council includes mainly representatives of state bodies; Khoma was included as the only CSO representative. Khoma’s inclusion in this working group will allow the organization to represent the interests of independent producers and to influence decision-making in the development of Tajik cinematography.

This initial meeting was devoted to discussion of the current National Film Development Program until 2015 and the results of its implementation. The program was not fully implemented, particularly with regard to the production of national content. To date, the requirement of obtaining a license for audiovisual production is a failure of the national policy that will only become more acute with the transition to digital broadcasting, a fact that Khoma brought up at the meeting. As a result of the first meeting, the Council’s board decided to launch development of a strategy for national cinema in Tajikistan for 2016-2020 based on the gaps in the previous program. Khoma was asked to prepare a report on the current state of the cinema industry in Tajikistan for the next meeting of the Council, which will be dedicated to drafting the new state program.

#### *4.2. Provide legal support to media and journalists in need*

##### *KAZAKHSTAN*

During the reporting period, IKZ’s lawyer provided 7 consultations regarding implementation of laws on access to information, advertising, and establishment and registration of media;

- Otyrar TV requested clarifications on laws governing advertising. They received a detailed consultation about how to interpret particular clauses of the laws On Advertising and On TV and Radio Broadcasting.
- Journalists from website InformBiuro, Radiotochka, and 365info requested clarifications on access to information issues. They received a detailed consultation covering several specific cases as well as a help in completing complaint forms.

#### **Monitoring of publications and broadcasts regarding the law On Access to Information:**

In August-September 2015, more than 84 online and video publications about the law “On Access to Information” were published/broadcast in Kazakhstani media as part of an

informational campaign to inform the public about their rights under the law and the procedures and forms required to obtain information from state bodies. A total of 51 media outlets including 35 online, 9 TV and 7 print media outlets distributed 84 publications to the population. Internews Kazakhstan initiated this campaign in close coordination with other members of the Coalition and members of the Parliament.

Several TV interviews were shared via the A2I Cloud hub and were available for broadcast for partner media outlets. Almost all of the A2I TV partner stations in Kazakhstan broadcast these interviews either in full or in part in September 2015. For instance, Otyrar TV used fragments of both interviews in their weekly analytical program "Kala." Accent TV broadcast both interviews as programs in and of themselves, as did TV6 in Semey and First North in Petropavlovsk. Fifth Channel in Karaganda used portions of an interview in their morning programming and broadcast them in full. Ridder TV broadcast Dmitry Kotlyar's interview.

The informational campaign includes:

- Preparation and publication of analytical materials, expert interviews on clarification of the main provisions of the draft law "On access to information," mechanisms and procedures of implementation of the right to access information, recommendations of international organizations on improving the quality of coverage of the draft laws in the business press, Kazakh-speaking press and regional press;
- Production of video interviews or TV programs to inform the public about the right of access to information and what citizens need to do in order to receive information.

*Results of the information campaign:*

- Media received presentations, opinions of experts and developers, deputies and representatives of state bodies about the draft law of the RoK "On access to information";
- Effective implementation of the draft law of the RoK "On access to information" is impossible without informing the public about the procedures and forms required to request information;
- Carrying out of the information campaign allowed stakeholders in different regions of the country to learn about methods that can be used to obtain information about the activities of state bodies and other holders of information through the media. Messages were distributed through media of various formats and in locations across the country, including some (e.g. Khabar, Eurasia, Pravda) that cover more than 95% of the country;
- Journalists received knowledge and information related to international standards on access to information;
- Promotion of the CSO coalition's activities on developing the draft law of the RoK "On access to information" in line with international standards.

#### **KYRGYZSTAN**

29 people (14 women and 15 men) received legal assistance from the Media Policy Institute on the restoration of copyright, labor relations, the use of advertising legislation, intentional damage or destruction of property. Legal assistance was also provided about access to information, problems related to violations of the rights of journalists and journalists' responsibility for violations of the law. In addition, Media Policy Institute (MPI) provided legal consultations to five organizations.

*Examples of legal consultations provided this quarter include:*

- Altynai Isaeva, the lawyer of Media Policy Institute, represented the interests of Vladimir Tsay (a Kloop.kg journalist) in an investigation conducted by the Sverdlovsk regional department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of based on a report he submitted. Tsay had gone to the police to report that his video camera had been [damaged in an attack](#) by an unknown man. Police opened a criminal case. The investigation has been closed and the matter has been referred to the Sverdlovsk District Court of Bishkek. Media Policy Institute will continue to advise the victim, Vladimir Tsay.
- MPI prepared an analysis of the events around the case of “Rubikon” – the financial center of media holding “Vecherniy Bishkek.” Recently a court decided that 50% of Rubikon’s shares must be returned to the company’s ex-cofounder Alexandr Ryabushkin after 14 years. MPI expressed its [position](#) on this case in public appeals. Public opinion on “Vecherniy Bishkek” case divided into two camps, while some are for the court's decision, others support the current owners. Therefore, MPI prepared an independent chronological analysis of the situation and noted the most important events around "Rubikon" since its inception but was not able to obtain the company’s charter, which is a crucial piece of evidence to form an independent legal opinion about the case and its outcome. MPI will continue to monitor the case and continue to try to obtain a copy of the charter for review. The analysis has not yet been published.
- Zulfiya Suhuza came to MPI for legal aid. She is a former chief editor of the Dungan newspaper "Huimin bo." Ms. Suhuza was fired by the chairman of the Dungan Association, MP Bahadyr Suleimanov. Ms. Suhuza believes that she was [fired](#) after she started asking questions about the financial activities of the Dungan Association. Firing was recorded in Ms Suhuza’s workbook without her knowledge. The State Labor Inspectorate conducted an audit and confirmed that the dismissal was illegal. They ordered the newspaper to reinstate her in her position and provide back pay. However, the decision of the Pervomaisky district court of Bishkek for reinstatement was dismissed, while the decision of the appellate court was upheld. Bahadyr Suleimanov then sued Ms. Suhuza for protection of honor, dignity and business reputation and requested compensation for moral damages in the amount of 55,000 soms. As a result of conversations with the Media Commissioner Akmat Alagushev and expert Nadejda Alisheva, MPI lawyers decided to represent the interests of Ms. Suhuza in this suit. The case file is now being studied.
- MPI lawyer Altynay Isaeva attended questioning of Indira Kamchybekova, a correspondent of online information agency AKIpress. Ms. Kamchybekova took part in the traffic police initiative “Press,” when traffic police officers work together with journalists. A drunken owner of a vehicle that was stopped by traffic police officers attacked Ms. Kamchybekova during a night operation. Ms. Kamchybekova got minor injuries and was requested to give information on this case at the Sverdlovskiy police department. Initiation of the criminal case against the attacker is up to Ms. Kamchybekova, who will be assisted and consulted by MPI whenever required.

- Also, in September 2015, at the request of Internews, MPI began reviewing a complaint from the director of Yntymak (regional public broadcaster based in Osh) regarding the election of new members to the broadcaster's Supervisory Board, a process which he feels is not proceeding fairly and according to law. MPI is currently reviewing relevant documentation and will provide an opinion next quarter.
- Parliamentary group "Ata Meken" applied to MPI with a request to assess whether OTRK, ELTR and online Information Agency "K-news" complied with the norms of journalism ethics and the law "On Media" while producing and then broadcasting/posting the story "Migrants counted as supporters of the "Ata Meken" party without their knowledge?". MPI lawyers prepared a legal opinion, which was later provided to the lawyer of OTRK.

In addition, Altynay Isaeva, MPI's lawyer, held a training for students of the Kloop School of Journalism on legal issues. Seventeen students (including 9 women and 8 men) took part. The three-day training included modules on "Legal regulation of the media," "Legal regulation of the media and the Internet," "Access to Information," "The right to privacy, the right to one's image." The following issues were discussed: the legal status of the journalist, his/her rights and obligations, responsibility of journalists for violation of the law; legal features of media regulation in the Kyrgyz Republic and online, the media registration procedure, grounds for refusal of registration, the basis of liability and exemptions from it; how to access information, types of queries, challenging refusals to provide information, gaining access to meetings, accreditation of the media with state agencies; boundaries between private life and the right to information, public information, the right to one's own image. The modules were held in an interactive manner and included real case studies from the experience of MPI.

## *TAJIKISTAN*

***Analysis of the Protocol of the Government of Tajikistan for compliance with legislation on access to information.*** On July 1, 2015 some websites published a leaked photo of the [Protocol](#) of the Government of Tajikistan of June 30, 2015, where it was stated that the National Information Agency Khovar (the Agency) has the right to cover all official information exclusively and the independent media will be able to obtain information only through the Agency regarding all official events and comments. This protocol directly contradicts the legislation of Tajikistan and international standards. Despite the fact that this type of document isn't a legal act with legal force, the silence of the Government in response to requests for clarification greatly disturbed the media and civil society. Khoma received a number of requests from media outlets and civic organizations to analyze the Protocol. According to Khoma's lawyer, analysis of the legal framework on access to information in Tajikistan showed that the provisions of leaked Protocol run completely contrary to both national and international laws. The analysis found that the Protocol contradicts the Constitution and more than 10 laws and regulations on access to information,

During the reporting period, the legal advisor of Khoma provided 57 legal consultations for media professionals (15 women and 42 men). They covered issues including:

**Q:** How does the law regulate Internet and is the Internet considered a form of mass media?



**A:** Today Internet in Tajikistan is not considered to be Mass Media but rather a means and method of information delivery. However, this does not mean that the Internet is not regulated by law in Tajikistan. The law regulates the Internet if an offense is committed while using the Internet. A number of articles in the Criminal Code of Tajikistan concern crimes that can be committed online:

*Illegal collection and dissemination of information about private life (Article 144); Insult of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan or slander against him (Art.137); Public calls for extremist activity (Art. 3071); insulting the authorities (Art. .330); Public calls for aggressive war (Art.396).*

**Q:** Which law of Tajikistan covers social advertising? Are there any benefits available for production and dissemination of social advertising?

**A.:** The Advertising Law of Tajikistan from 01.08.2003, № 34 regulates social advertising. The law identifies that “social advertising is noncommercial information from governmental agencies on healthy lifestyle issues, health care, environmental protection, social care, and security of the population.” It does not contain any details on the benefits of production of social advertising.

**Q:** I have heard that each organization is obliged to have a registration book for external examination. What kind of book is this?

**A:** Every business entity (entrepreneur, public association, non-profit organization) is required to have a registration book for external examinations. The book records all the external examinations provided for the organization (the dates, the goal, the reason for examination, the name of the person and organization providing the examination).

**Q:** In compliance with the Media Law of the Republic of Tajikistan, the responsible governmental person can be brought to justice for failure to provide requested information. Will you provide information on what kind of punishment this entails?

**A:** To date, the legislation of the Republic of Tajikistan provides only one type of liability for failure to provide requested information. According to the Criminal Code (Art. 148), “Refusal to provide the requested information, documents, or materials directly affect the rights and freedoms of people and the punishment for this is a fine in the amount of three hundred to five hundred indicators\settlement rate (a specific sum of money used for calculation of taxes, duties and other compulsory payments and penalties) or disqualification for a period of three to five years.”

**Q:** Is there a possibility for independent broadcasters to establish their own network of digital signal transmission? If the response is positive, in this case could we include 4 state broadcasters into our digital broadcast package?

**A:** Today in Tajikistan there is no law regulating digital broadcasting. It is not likely that such an independent operator could be formed in Tajikistan because current laws do not provide for it.

#### *4.3. Organizational development to support sustainability of media legal partners*

##### *KAZAKHSTAN*

Internews continues to provide support for local subgrantee Internews Kazakhstan (IKZ) to increase its sustainability and build a stronger organizational foundation.

## **Challenges**

### **Innovation Lab**

Following the first annual Media and Innovation Lab in Bishkek, Internews held a regional meeting to discuss lessons learned and note points to be addressed at the second Lab, which is preliminarily scheduled to take place in June 2016 in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Following the meeting, a number of ideas will be taken into account. (More information available upon request.)